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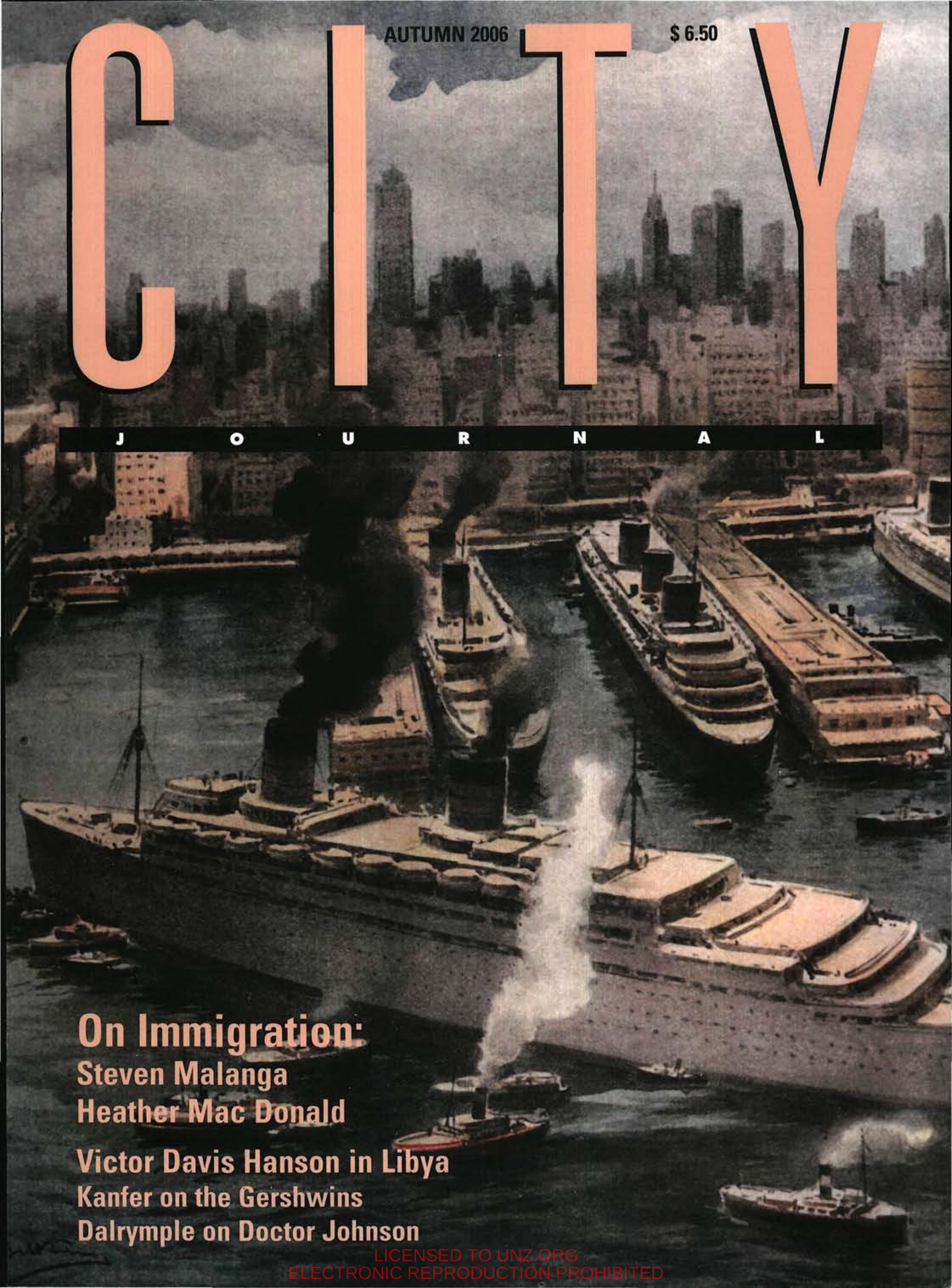


On Immigration:

Steven Malanga

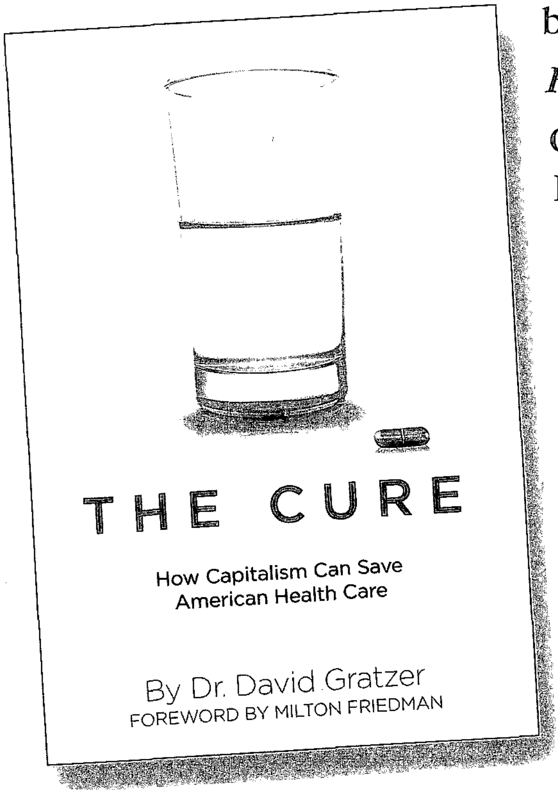
Heather Mac Donald

Victor Davis Hanson in Libya

Kanfer on the Gershwins

Dalrymple on Doctor Johnson

THE CURE:
HOW CAPITALISM CAN SAVE AMERICAN HEALTH CARE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How Capitalism Can Save American Health Care
By Dr. David Gratzer
FOREWORD BY MILTON FRIEDMAN

by David Gratzer

Foreword by Milton Friedman

October 2006

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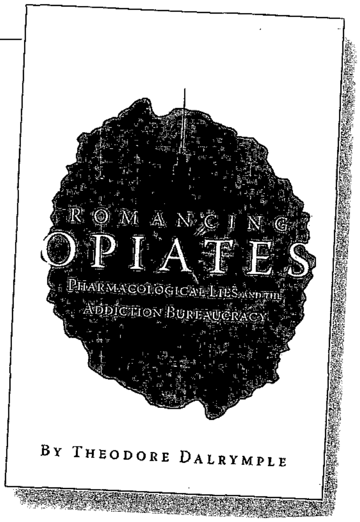
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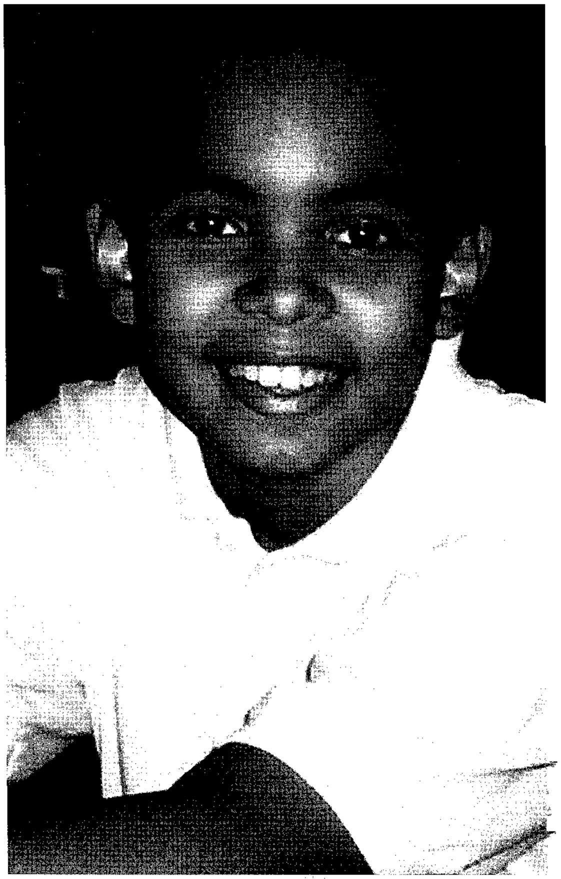

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Old Glories

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"The journal that saved the city."

—The Public Interest

In Prospect

What, you may ask, is a story about George and Ira Gershwin doing in a policy magazine? Put aside the fact that Stefan Kanfer's "The Dynamo and the Jeweler" on page 84 is a hard-to-put-down read, delicious both for its narrative skill and its witty, beautifully crafted prose, an adornment to any magazine's pages. Does it illuminate the issues that fall under *City Journal*'s purview?

Very much so, we think. We have always argued against the Marxoid notion that culture is a mere "reflection" of economic relations, an effect, never a cause. Usually we make this argument in terms of elite ideas and beliefs, taking the view, as John Maynard Keynes put it, that "The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist." Theodore Dalrymple's "The Gift of Language" (page 102) examines a recent instance: he shows how the contemporary theory that language is a natural human endowment, which all people learn perfectly without the need for instruction, leads in the real world to a laxness in teaching correct grammar and spelling, which in turn deprives many disadvantaged children of a tool they critically need for success as adults. And of course we have often argued that elite ideas very quickly trickle directly down to the lowest rung of society. Members of the underclass, for example, believe themselves to be victims of the system no less than *New York Times* editorialists believe them to be: and since people act according to the ideas they have in their minds, such a view has unfortunate consequences for the underclass and for society at large.

But popular culture has its power, no less than high culture, and it shapes the worldview of millions. New Yorkers like the Gershwins, on the Broadway stage and in movie musicals, played a key role in molding American culture in the 1920s and '30s, offering a casual, witty, sophisticated urbanity that put sparkle in the Roaring Twenties and gave hope, through its optimistic stylishness, to a Depression-wracked country that needed an hour of cheer. George Gershwin, also a gifted classical composer, succeeded in making tunes deeply informed by the classical composers part of the soundtrack of ordinary American life. When you think of the morale and the behavior of the great democratic mass of Americans through those decades of good times and bad, that is no small achievement for all those who helped create the national culture.

Especially when you compare that popular culture with the popular culture of today, which in some of its manifestations—such as hip-hop, as we have written—degrades rather than uplifts. What then to make of today's tabloid celebrity Paris Hilton? Kay S. Hymowitz's wonderfully entertaining and insightful "The Trash Princess" (page 111), like one of George Orwell's dissections of some ephemeral item of popular culture to get to the heart of the culture's values, comes up with a different answer than you'd at first expect. Yes, the raunchy heiress—in her promiscuity, exhibitionism, consumerism, and narcissism—embodies much that's wrong with today's America; but the reason she interests us is not because we envy her or would like to be like her but, as Hymowitz shrewdly concludes, quite the reverse.

We are proud that this spring, contributing editors Hymowitz and Kanfer will be coming out with the 14th and 15th volumes of a critically acclaimed series of books that are collections of *City Journal* articles (or, in a few cases, elaborations of what began life as *City Journal* articles). The title of Hymowitz's book is *Marriage and Caste in America: Separate and Unequal Families in a Post-Marital Age*; Kanfer's book, which will contain this issue's Gershwin article, is called *The Voodoo That They Did So Well: The Wizards Who Invented the New York Stage.* The publisher of both is Ivan R. Dee. These books, we like to think, are proof of our boast that *City Journal* stories are not ephemeral but lasting, and that some of them transcend journalism and become literature. Volumes 16 and 17 are already in the works.

Soundings

Gotham's Telltale Reading Tests

Read 'em and weep at P.S. 33.

One morning in May 2005, New York mayor Michael Bloomberg's office bused the city hall press corps to P.S. 33, an elementary school in one of the Bronx's poorest areas. In the school's auditorium, overflowing with happy children and teachers, the mayor proclaimed a miracle. With an enrollment 95 percent Hispanic and black, and with 100 percent of the students poor enough to qualify for free lunch, P.S. 33 had hit the jackpot on the state's fourth-grade reading test. Over 83 percent of the school's 140 fourth-graders scored at or above proficiency (or grade level), the mayor explained, compared with only 35.8 percent in 2004—an unheard-of one-year gain of close to 50 percentage points. The school's terrific score was just four percentage points below the average for the richest suburban districts in the state.

The P.S. 33 success was the cherry topping off a very sweet election-year gift for Mayor Bloomberg. At the press conference, he could report "historic" and "record-breaking" gains in reading—59.5 percent of all Gotham fourth-graders had achieved proficiency on the state test, a gain of nearly ten percentage points from the year before. The results proved, the mayor contended, that his education reforms "really are paying off for those who were previously left behind." Media coverage the next day echoed the mayor's claims. It was clear that mayoral candidate Bloomberg had hit a home run right on the home field of his likeliest Democratic challenger, Fernando Ferrer.

When the 2006 reading scores came out in September, however, Bloomberg was in California, burnishing his national political image and spreading the gospel about the benefits of mayoral control of urban school districts. It was up to schools chancellor Joel Klein to discuss this year's results at a reporters' "roundtable" at his Tweed Courthouse headquarters (no gala press conference this year, no miracle schools to visit). Klein acknowledged that fourth-grade reading was down slightly but noted that Gotham remained ahead of most of the state's urban districts. And though eighth-grade reading was still dreadfully low—only 36.6 percent of city students had attained proficiency—it was up three points over 2005.

The education reporters seemed rather incurious about what happened to the P.S. 33 fourth-graders whom they celebrated as heroes last year. Too bad, because it would have been easy to find out. The federal No Child Left Behind law now requires state education authorities to test students in grades three through eight and make the scores public. Thus, one can for the first time track a particular student cohort's test scores on the same battery of state tests as they move from grade to grade. One discovers that the miraculous achievement of P.S. 33's fourth-graders in 2005 completely disintegrated in 2006, with the pass rate plummeting to 41.1 percent in the fifth grade. This year's fourth-graders at the school achieved proficiency at only a 47.5 percent rate.

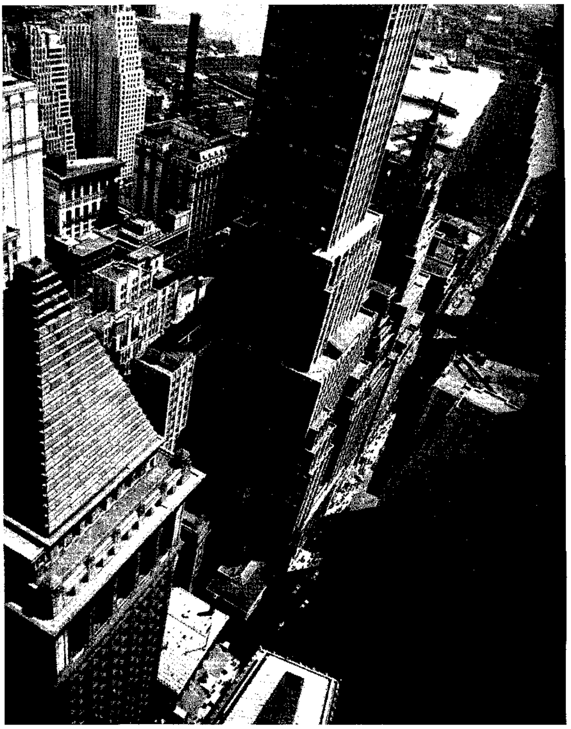
Put aside the raw numbers and consider the human consequences of this collapse. Last year, the mayor publicly honored 120 poor Hispanic and black children for beating the odds and passing the reading test. This year, half of those kids discovered that they were failures after all. Last year, they shone as stars of a mayoral campaign. This year, they were truly "left behind."

No one from city hall or the education department came to the school to explain how so many kids could be high achievers one year and failures the next. Nor was the school's miracle principal, Elba Lopez, around to explain the shocking setback. After last year's triumphant press conference, she retired, collecting a $15,000 bonus for her school's spectacular 2005 performance, boosting her pension $12,000 for life. Meanwhile, the school's wildly fluctuating test numbers are so unbelievable that they should attract the attention of state education authorities and the city school system's special office of investigations.

Unlike P.S. 33's 2005 scores, the city's overall test results are all too believable—and revealing. Enough year-to-year test data now exist to make reasonable judgments about student achievement under Mayor Bloomberg. The scorecard on fourth-grade reading: for the four years prior to the Bloomberg reforms, under chancellors Rudy Crew and Harold Levy, the average annual gain was five percentage points. The Bloomberg administration can claim an annual gain of just two percentage points since its reforms kicked in with the 2003–04 school year.

The eighth-grade reading results are dismal. Since 1999, the percentage of the city's eighth-graders achieving proficiency has risen just 1.3 points, leaving nearly two-thirds of students unprepared for the ninth grade in 2006. By the gold-standard federal NAEP tests, the percentage of those unprepared jumps to over 80 percent. Clearly, mayoral control—at least under this mayor—hasn't improved eighth-grade reading.

All these test results must be immensely disappointing to anyone who backed mayoral control as a means of boosting academic achievement. Having succeeded with the public celebration of P.S. 33's one-year triumph, the administration probably will keep trying to sweep bad news about student performance under the rug. And the big losers of this denial of reality will be the kids, particularly those most at risk. *—Sol Stern*



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Surreal London

There are 1,200 stabbings and $1 million houses.

I recently went to visit a friend in North London. My wife drove from our central London apartment, and it took her an hour and a half to go eight miles. I took public transportation to get there in less than half the time. Still, one can see why Londoners want to insulate themselves from fellow residents. You can lock the doors of your car against them.

Newspaper headlines that evening screamed about a bloodbath outside a London McDonald's, with two youths getting shot. Every day, one confronts news of that sort: as I write, for example, comes the story of a Congolese immigrant, a churchgoing university student of mathematics, killed after asking 12 youths making noise outside his apartment building at night to go away, since he needed sleep. Outraged and intoxicated, some returned later and stabbed him to death. Among those arrested: a 15- and a 17-year-old.

For once, the police spokesman did not tell us that it was a robbery that went wrong, or a case of someone in the wrong place at the wrong time. He said that the victim did what any normal citizen should do. "It just so happens," he added, "that one or more of the youths were such that they decided to go back and attack him."

It just so happens? A reported 1,200 stabbings occurred in London last year, and evidence in the *British Medical Journal* suggests that such attacks are becoming not only more numerous, but more serious. Woundings that endangered life nearly doubled in Britain between 1997 and 2005.

I lost my way a couple of times on my way to see my friend. I asked directions from people in the street, and they visibly flinched, though neither my appearance nor my manner (to say nothing of my age) suggests aggression. They probably thought that, at best, I was a mental patient undergoing treatment in "the community," as people call it today. Two fled, claiming ignorance of the road I needed to find, which, as it turned out, was only a few yards away.

I looked in the windows of a real-estate agent. A house in the area, by no means large, would cost about $1.1 million.

—Theodore Dalrymple

Soundings

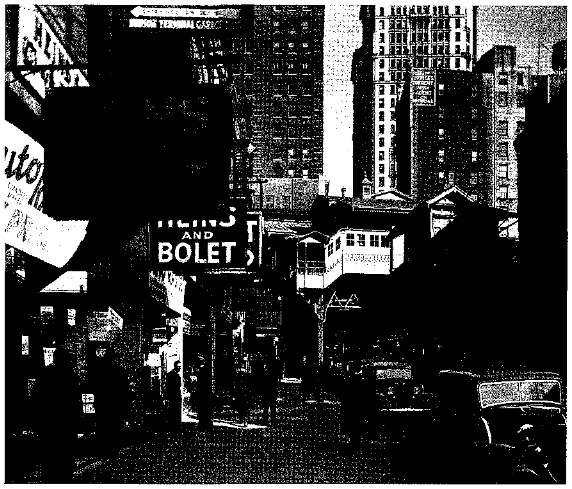
More Money to Shrink Health Care?

This plan already failed once before in New York State.

When it comes to reforming New York State's bloated health-care system, it often seems like "déjà vu all over again," as Yogi Berra would say. Earlier this month, the Pataki administration announced that the federal government will spend some $1.5 billion to help shrink New York's health-care colossus, in part by cutting costs in its Medicaid program, by far the nation's most expensive. The deal recalls agreements that New York negotiated with the Clinton administration, which pumped billions into state health care to streamline it but did little except expand the system further and drive up costs.

The nineties plan grew out of a New York State–commissioned study that called for slashing the number of beds in New York hospitals, reducing subsidies to those hospitals, and other reforms. When hospitals grumbled that they needed federal aid to cope with such strong medicine, the Clinton administration ponied up around $1 billion, earmarking some of it to help hospitals open neighborhood outpatient facilities, believing that they could provide less expensive care than emergency rooms and hospital wards. The Clinton plan also set aside money to retrain workers who'd lose jobs when hospitals began shutting unused wards and eliminating beds. Hoping to control Medicaid costs, the administration encouraged the state to shift recipients into managed-care programs, which limit what doctors can charge.

Virtually none of this worked out as planned, with expensive consequences. As part of its managed-care drive, the state unwisely gave HMOs the right to enroll applicants into Medicaid, something that only the state—which, in theory, has an incentive to ensure that applicants qualify before signing them up—could do before. The companies responded with (astonishingly unanticipated) gusto, reeling in new revenue-producing members and swelling the state's Medicaid rolls. Meanwhile, hospitals happily took the federal money allocated to build the new neighborhood-care facilities, but balked at reducing beds or eliminating unneeded wards. The result: the industry, already oversize, grew bigger still. Needless to say, the money that the feds had set aside to retrain unemployed health-care workers proved unneeded. Eventually, the politically powerful hospitals got the funds sent to them.



In the new agreement, Washington is again letting the state depute HMOs to enroll applicants into Medicaid while simultaneously signing them up as their own clients. And the Bush plan includes funds that again allow hospitals to convert unneeded wards to outpatient facilities, hoping that these will be cheaper than hospital care. To offset spending on these facilities, the Bush plan is providing funds that will help pay off the debts of hospitals that the state wants to close. But the money will only be useful if state pols can muster the courage to shutter underused hospitals—something they have flinched from doing for 30 years.

The Bush plan does offer a few other new wrinkles. It is mandating, for instance, that New York State triple the amount of money it recovers from Medicaid fraud to $645 million by 2011. While that's a worthy goal in a state that for years has lagged in fighting fraud, the fiscal impact will be small on a program that will soon likely cost upward of $50 billion yearly.

The Bush-Pataki deal is thus the latest version of a reform that the state's health-care industry has advocated for more than a decade, proposing to save money by first spending lots of it. Until now, it hasn't worked. Maybe, then, the real key

Soundings

to shrinking the industry is just to shrink it. That sounds like something Yogi might have said.

—Steven Malanga

Talking Turkey

The E.U. aspirant needs free-speech lessons.

The Turkish government often seems determined to strike propaganda coups against itself. It put 34-year-old author Elif Shafak on trial recently for questioning Turkish national identity, and dropped the charges only after predictably adverse publicity. But the charges will be a warning to other Turkish writers not to go too far.

In her latest novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, which has already sold 60,000 copies, Shafak tells the story of a Turkish and an Armenian-American family. On no subject is the Turkish state more sensitive than on the massacre of the Armenians in 1915. Was it just one horrible massacre among others, or the twentieth century's first genocide? A lot turns on the question—or at least so both Armenians and Turks believe.

Shafak specializes in inflaming the sore points of Turkish history. She wants a Turkey less ethnically and culturally homogeneous than that of the traditional Kemalist vision, and thus not only questions the sanctity of Atatürk himself and the army that protects his legacy, but expresses sympathy for Kurds and even Greeks.

One may doubt whether the realistic alternative to the Kemalist version of Turkey is a multiculturalist paradise, where the Turk lies down with the Greek, so to speak, rather than a Muslim theocracy. But Shafak has every right to her views and should not have faced persecution for them (apparently, she has received death threats, too).

That does not make her a heroine, however, all of whose views we must accept. She subscribes, a recent admiring *Le Monde* article suggests, to those hackneyed views of the 1960s that have brought much social dislocation to the West, and would be more devastating still in Turkey. She is a feminist who seems not only to deplore Turkish machismo, no doubt understandably, but also to believe that men, beyond insemination on demand, are redundant. In reaching this conclusion, she reflects upon her own experience as an upper-middle-class intellectual and assumes that it is exemplary for millions of compatriots.

Her father abandoned the family when she was an infant, leaving her grandmother and her mother to raise her. Her mother, Westernized and highly educated, became a diplomat. Shafak was born in Strasbourg and lived successively in various capitals, including Madrid. According to *Le Monde*, "she grew up in a universe in which women were independent and educated, where the cultural heritage was passed from mother to daughter, and marriage and motherhood were assaults on freedom." Having just given birth herself to a daughter, she said, "As for me, I will always cultivate my independence, and my daughter will be raised like that."

It seems scarcely to cross her mind (at least as *Le Monde* presents it) that this attitude is not necessarily a useful prescription for all of Turkish society, or at least for that considerable part of it that does not live in, and was not raised in, cosmopolitan diplomatic circles. In short, Shafak seems a typical example of the intellectual who uses personal history uncritically to draw conclusions about society as a whole.

Dangerous as such intellectuals no doubt are, they should not have to go to jail for their views. I disagree with what Shafak says, but I defend (to the death it would perhaps be too much to claim) her right to say it.

—Theodore Dalrymple

Warrior Princess

Oriana Fallaci understood the threat that the West faces.

Oriana Fallaci, who died in September at 73, was no latter-day crusader readying for the onslaught of the Islamic invader. As she saw it, the incursion had already taken place, and post-Christian Europe was the worse for it. She bequeathed to the world a whole shelf of books, some luminous, some overwrought, but all written with an ardent mind and heart.

Fallaci's final volume, *The Force of Reason*, recites a litany of radical Islam's recent crimes—beheadings, explosions, murders, mutilations, anti-Semitic and anti-Christian screeds—and reinforces her critique with the sharpest weapon of all: sarcasm. "Always clever, the Muslims. Always at the top. Always ingenious. In philosophy, in mathematics, in gastronomy, in literature, in architecture, in medicine, in music, in law, in hydraulics, in cooking. Always stupid, we Westerners. Always inadequate, always inferior. Therefore obliged to thank some son of Allah who preceded us."

Small wonder that the howls still echo in Continental courtrooms, where she was forever facing legal charges for "xenophobia" thanks to observations like this: "If you are a Westerner, and you say your civilization is superior, the most developed that this planet has ever seen, you go to the stake. But if you are a son of Allah or one of their collaborationists and you say that Islam has always been a superior civilization, a ray of light . . . nobody touches you. Nobody sues you. Nobody condemns you."

Her withering remarks targeted not only the Islamists but her friends, her colleagues, her associates. She saw Christians and Jews, and atheists like herself, outpopulated, sated, ripe targets for a cultural defeat. All this because of a decline in the intelligence that was once a fact of life in the West. "Refusing to admit that all Islam is a pond inside which we are all drowning, in fact, is against Reason," she observed. "Not defending our territory, our homes, our children, our dignity, our essence, is against Reason."

She sounded taps over the Italy of her childhood, but to the end she believed in the United States, where she had moved. Recalling the courage of the American bounceback after 9/11, Fallaci discarded her perennial pessimism to declare: "I set aside the anger I feel for the half-witted who want to remove the Christmas Tree from the Rockefeller Center. I set aside the contempt I feel for the multimillionaire third-worlder Hollywood stars, the bastards dressed up as University professors, the wretches who support pro-Islamic obscenities of Pro-Islamic UN.

"I set aside the disappointments that America has inflicted and inflicts upon me and upon Americans who fight like me, and I savored the salt of hope. The same hope I feel when I look at the photos transmitted by the probes seeking life on Mars, while looking at them I think: we cannot lose."

R.I.P. Oriana Fallaci, writer, warrior princess. We shall not look upon her like again.

— *Stefan Kanfer*

CUNY's Virtuous Circle

Donors reward a return to high standards.

After nearly 30 years of decline, the City University of New York has spent the last decade repairing its academic standards. Thanks to its reforms, CUNY is seeing the beginning of a virtuous circle: wealthy alumni and prominent New Yorkers are donating money to what they again see as a worthy institution.

CUNY began its descent in 1970, when it gutted entrance requirements to its four-year colleges in the name of social and racial justice. By the mid-nineties, the once-esteemed university had become a dumping ground for academically weak graduates of New York's failing high schools. But CUNY began turning itself around a decade ago by gradually raising admissions standards, ending remedial classes at four-year colleges, and requiring high SAT scores at some schools.

The flagship of CUNY's rejuvenation effort is its Honors College, launched in 2001. The college is unabashedly elitist. The combination of high entrance standards and free tuition is luring more than 1,200 top students a year, many from exam high schools like Stuyvesant. The college has become more selective each year. This fall, it admitted its sixth freshman class, with an impressive mean SAT score of 1,381. Current students include David Bauer, who won the $100,000 Intel Science prize while attending Hunter College High School.

Honors College students enroll at one of seven senior CUNY campuses; they take most classes with regular CUNY students but participate in four exclusive New York–themed seminars during their first two years. Besides free tuition, students get laptops and $7,500 "study stipends." The money and other perks are a big help, since most of the students are from modest backgrounds (nearly one-third are immigrants).

CUNY's new standards have paid off academically: 91 percent of the first Honors College class graduated within four years, and many students have won top awards, including two Truman scholarships. Graduates have gone on to law school at Harvard and Cornell and to jobs at investment banks like Bear, Stearns.

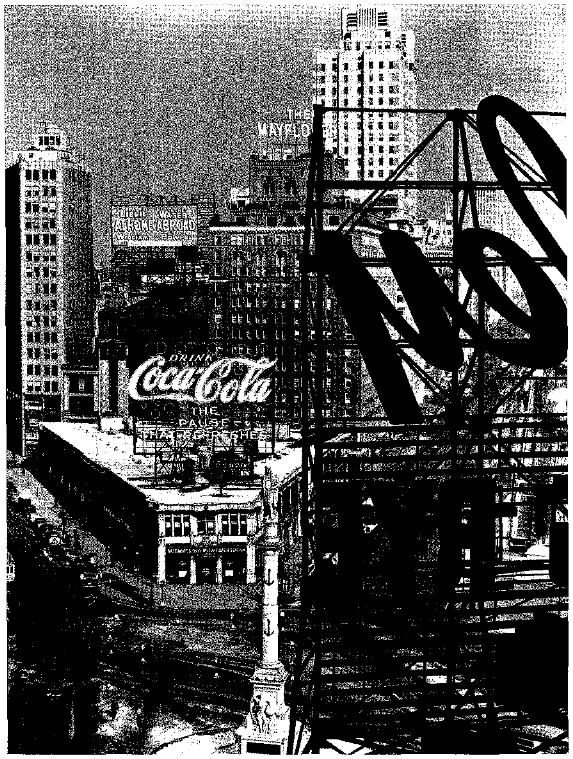
Enna Weng is one such graduate. Graduating from Baruch a semester early in December 2005, she's now working 13-hour days at Morgan Stanley. Weng, who moved to Gotham from China when she was 15 and graduated from Bayside High School in Queens, chose the Honors College over NYU and Cooper Union. At Baruch, she completed internships at two investment banks and used her $7,500 stipend to study in Tokyo. She found her classes, especially one on derivatives, demanding and useful to her trading career, and had nothing but praise for the Honors College seminars, saying that she wished they had continued during her final two years.

Because Honors College students join modest backgrounds with high achievement, they "bring back that old-fashioned CUNY hunger for a good education," says Richard Kaye, a Princeton Ph.D. who teaches an "Arts in New York City" seminar in the program. "The quality of the students has been amazing. They're the most intellectually curious students I've taught."

The quality of CUNY's entire student body is up. When the university launched its reforms, entering students were among the bottom third nationwide. They're now on the cusp of the top third, according to *The Economist*. Between 1995 and 2004, CUNY's enrollment of graduates from the city's top public high schools more than doubled. And all these well-qualified students improve the quality of CUNY classes generally, as the university must serve its best students with newly rigorous courses.

As CUNY has lifted itself out of the abyss, donors have noticed. The Honors College raised $10 million in its first two years, and $45 million in the last four years. William Macaulay, chairman of a private-equity firm and a 1966 Baruch graduate, made the largest donation this summer, citing "the turnaround at CUNY over the past several years" as the reason for his $30 million gift.

Donors have also boosted giving to the rest of the university. An "Invest in CUNY" campaign to raise $1.2 billion by 2012, begun in 2000, has reaped $810 million, with donations increasing at an annual rate of over 22 percent. Intel cofounder Andrew Grove, a 1960 City College grad who began studies as an immigrant who spoke little English, gave $26 million to City College's School of Engineering last year.



Further, as CUNY churns out high-quality graduates, it creates a new crop of high-income donors. Weng told me that she has already given money twice to Baruch. In a few decades, if CUNY continues to build on its progress, future graduates like Intel Science prizewinner Bauer will be announcing the multimillion-dollar gifts.

—*Nicole Gelinas*

Eliot Spitzer's CFE Problem

Perhaps he can make the suit's outcome less bad.

One of the tough issues that Eliot Spitzer must face after (almost certainly) getting sworn in as New York's next governor will be the final judgment by the state's court of appeals in the 13-year-old

Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. *New York* lawsuit. Based on its past rulings, the high court, which heard arguments in Albany in October, probably will hold that Gotham is entitled to almost $5 billion a year in extra state funding for its schools—close to the amount that the trial court ordered last year.

This outcome will give Spitzer a huge political migraine. On the one hand, the forces that backed the CFE lawsuit—the teachers' union, the education-industry interests, the New York City Democrats—represent the heart of Spitzer's liberal political base and wait eagerly for a big payoff. On the other hand, the billions in higher taxes needed to pay for the increased funding for the city's schools will make it impossible for Spitzer to fulfill his campaign promise to rescue the state from its looming fiscal crisis. To complicate his life further, other urban school districts are poised to make their own financial claims on the state, based on this new legal precedent. The CFE plaintiffs conceded in oral arguments before the high court that the total bill to the state from all the districts' claims would be at least $8 billion.

Even if Spitzer could find the money, there's no reason to think that it would improve educational opportunities for schoolchildren. From its inception, this suit operated on the false premise that a court can determine the exact level of school spending that will magically produce a quality education for all. In fact, the theory that more money leads to academic improvement not only has been exhaustively refuted in courtroom testimony; it also has had a real-world test as the CFE case wound through the courts over the last 13 years. During that period, spending on Gotham's schools doubled, but student test scores and graduation rates stayed flat.

Certainly, Eliot Spitzer knows all the reasons why this case has been a perversion of the judicial process, why it has nothing to do with education improvement, and why it poses a grave threat to the state's fiscal future. After all, it was Attorney General Spitzer, acting as the state's lawyer, who noted that the court started down a perilous path when it decided that a single sentence in the state constitution, requiring New York to provide a "system of free common schools," allowed it to substitute its judgment about school funding for that of the legislative and executive branches. In their final pleadings before the court of appeals, the attorney general's lawyers vigorously argued—persuasively, in my view—that the case law didn't support the plaintiffs' claim that a state court could force the legislature and governor to earmark a specific amount of money for any budget category, including education.

Thus, even though the high court will likely rule that New York City should get more money for its schools, it may yet stop short of ordering the legislature and governor to appropriate a specified sum. Such a ruling would be an unprecedented breach in the hallowed doctrine of the separation of powers. This is a politically attuned court, and plunging into such uncharted waters—possibly provoking a constitutional crisis—would be extremely risky. Questions addressed to the CFE lawyers by some of the justices during oral arguments suggested that they were troubled by the implications of ordering the other two branches of government to appropriate an exact dollar amount for any government service. The better part of valor, the justices might reason, would be to give the new governor and legislature some leeway to work out the exact dollar amount of a settlement with the plaintiffs and the city.

Given the considerable political capital that his probable landslide victory will give him, along with his credibility with the various interest groups supporting the CFE, Governor Spitzer then might be able to lessen to some degree the damage to all the state's taxpayers from this misbegotten lawsuit. It would be a very small consolation at the end of a 13-year march of legal folly that has only diverted attention from the serious work of school reform. —*Sol Stern*

Shut Up, Fascist Pig

Columbia University's scandalous record on free speech

It's a common sight at the modern university. A group of leftist students storms the stage, shutting down a speaker about to depart from campus orthodoxy. Or perhaps a sound system gets unplugged, or pies fly. Instead of restoring order, campus security officers shrug and give up. The amateur censors then leap about jubilantly, feeling empowered. The university administration issues a few tut-tuts, underlines its safely abstract commitment to free speech, and then does nothing.

This familiar scenario unfolded at Columbia University on October 4. Students, many from the Chicano Caucus and the International Socialist Organization, stormed the stage during a speech by Jim Gilchrist, founder of the Minuteman Project, knocking over chairs and tables, preventing Gilchrist and a colleague from speaking. Amid the pandemonium, the students unfurled a banner heralding NO ONE IS ILLEGAL and chanted "Minutemen, Nazis, KKK—racist fascists go away."

As usual, the censors portray themselves as victims. Karina Garcia of the Chicano Caucus said that she and her comrades were targets of "a massive campaign of vilification and demonization." The socialist group's Monique Dols said the Minutemen, in scrambling to defend themselves, were guilty of "a violent backlash . . . in the same tradition of the attackers in Birmingham and Montgomery." Gilchrist was Bull Connor.

The *New York Times* unhelpfully described the Minutemen as "fiercely anti-immigrant" (not true: the group backs legal immigration) and given to hotheaded rhetoric (also untrue). Minutemen volunteers began patrolling the Arizona-Mexico border in 2004, watching for illegal immigrants and pointing them out to federal authorities. Since then, chapters have sprouted nationwide to protest the failure to stem the tide of illegals.

Columbia president Lee Bollinger, a First Amendment scholar, called the student disruption "one of the most serious breaches of academic faith that can occur at a university." The Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) was unimpressed. It referred caustically to "Bollinger's 'say one thing, do another' act" and noted that Columbia "has a long and distinguished record of suppression of free speech." Mayor Michael Bloomberg offered similarly blunt words on his weekly radio show: "Bollinger's just got to get his hands around this. . . . There are too many incidents at the same school where people get censored."

Any list of Columbia's greatest anti–free speech hits would include a professor in the Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures department threatening to throw a Jewish student out of his class after she asked a pointed question that made clear the pro-Palestinian bias of his argument, and the severe penalty imposed on the school's hockey team for using an off-color word on recruitment flyers ("Don't be a pussy. Play Columbia hockey"). The university canceled the team's season and put it on probation until 2009. In typical campus fashion, the school said that it wasn't censoring speech but merely disciplining the team for not following procedures. After protests, Columbia backed down a bit and allowed the hockey season to continue.

In 2000, Columbia introduced an Orwellian sexual misconduct policy. Liberal First Amendment champion Nat Hentoff called it the most repressive he had seen. Under its terms, students under investigation had no right to confront accusers, be present during testimony, or have an attorney present. The school also banned accused students from investigating charges themselves. If they tried to line up their own witnesses, they would face a new disciplinary hearing.

Also in 2000, after a group of women objected to a hypothetical on a criminal-law exam, the school threatened George Fletcher, Cardozo Professor of Jurisprudence, with disciplinary action. Law school dean David Leebron told Fletcher that his test question may have violated harassment law and created a hostile environment.

When Accuracy in Academia planned a set of campus speeches by conservatives (including me) a while back, Columbia deliberately undermined the meeting, demanding a last-minute $3,200 security deposit and, once it was paid, ruling that only Columbia students could go. This ruling not only violated the university's contract with AIA; it effectively shut down the event, since two-thirds of the attendees were coming from other schools.

Most of Columbia's censoring actions have wound up publicly muffled by garbled reporting in the *New York Times* (the sexual misconduct policy) or total non-reporting (the AIA adventure). But in the censoring of the Minutemen, an important politician spoke out, and videotape of the disruption played for days on the Internet. The university, of course, says that it is studying the issue. But maybe this time Bollinger—or his board—will have to act.

—John Leo

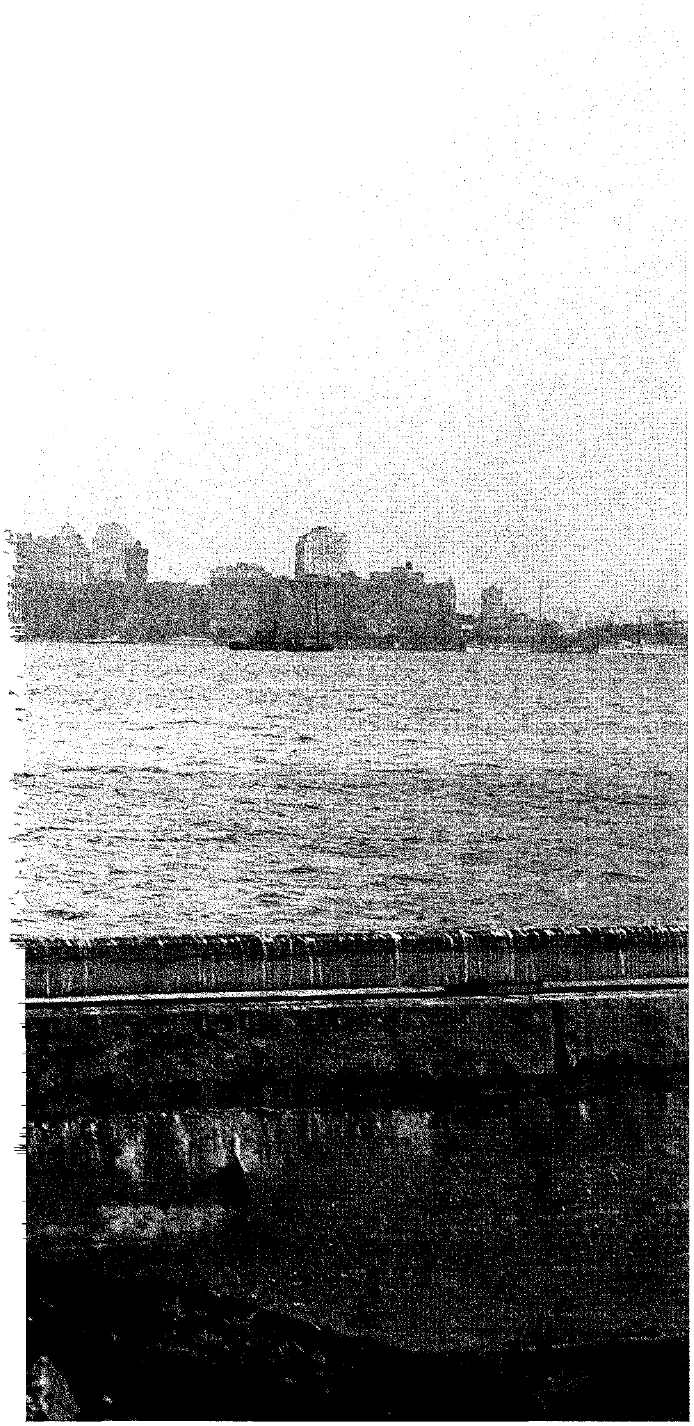
The Right Immigration Policy

Not amnesty or
guest workers,
but newcomers
who would
strengthen us

Steven Malanga

We Americans are having the wrong immigration debate, couched in the wrong terms. Those who oppose open borders, and especially unlimited flows of low-skilled workers from Mexico, are accused of being anti-immigration. Anyone who doubts that it's good for America to have an amnesty for illegal immigrants and a "guest worker" program that will produce even more low-wage, low-skilled immigration is quickly branded a modern-day nativist and Know-Nothing.

But it's possible to oppose all those things and still support healthy levels of immigration. The right debate should be about what kind of immigrants America should be admitting. It should ask how immigration can best benefit our economy and citizens. Countries with booming economies, countries that are, like the United States, immigrant magnets—Australia and Ireland, for instance—have set their immigration



Like this family on Ellis Island in 1925, . . .

BETTMANN/CORBIS

. . . the huddled masses of immigrants who arrived in the first great migration . . .

LEWIS W. HINE/GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE/GETTY IMAGES

priorities in precisely this way, creating much more rational systems than ours. Managed as part of our broader economic policy, immigration can provide America with badly needed skills, boost productivity, and raise our living standard.

But we'll never get to an immigration system that serves our national interest until we stop debating the issue in terms set down 50 years ago.

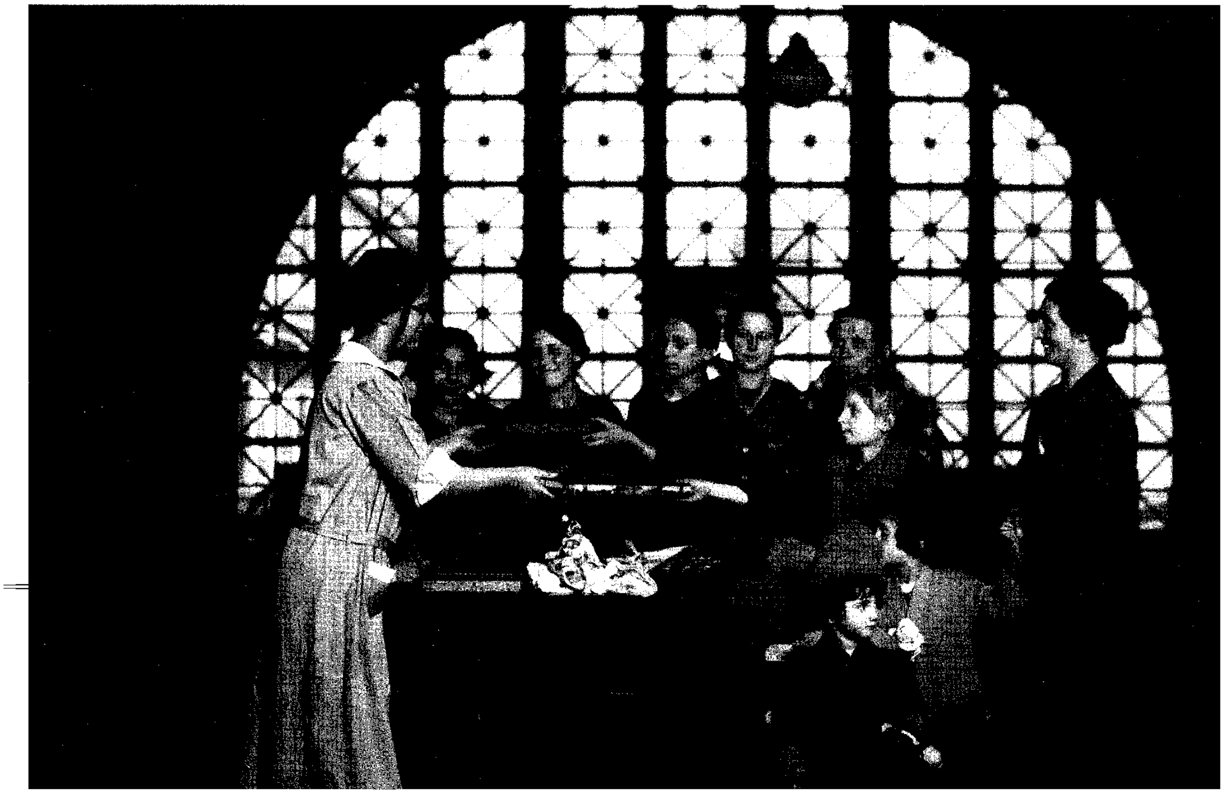
Open-borders advocates are right to say that immigration made America great: we are indeed, as the cliché goes, a nation of immigrants. But it's important to understand why previous generations of immigrants succeeded in America, how they helped the country grow, and how today's immigration differs. The popular image of the 24 million who came during the first great migration, from the 1880s to the 1920s, is that they were Europe's "tired" and "poor" masses, desperately escaping political or religious persecution and stagnant economies, making their way here with a few threadbare possessions. But what's forgotten is that many were also skilled workers. A 1998 National Academy of Sciences study noted that the immigrant workers of that era generally met or exceeded the skill levels of the native-born population, providing America's workforce with a powerful boost just when the country was metamorphosing from an agrarian into an industrial economy.

Even though nativists agitated to bar these Southern and Eastern European immigrants because they were not Anglo-Saxon, it was not until after World War I that Congress—stunned by the growing radicalism of European workers in the wake of the Russian Revolution and by postwar turmoil in Europe—finally enacted immigration quotas based on national origin, with the purpose of shifting the balance of immigration back to Northern European countries. Those quotas helped cut immigration in half, though it was the Depression that truly ended the great migration, turning America into a net exporter of emigrants during the 1930s, as 60 percent of those who came for a better life left when the economy soured, according to the National Academy of Sciences study.

For 40 years, the 1920s laws largely governed and limited immigration (with certain exceptions for refugees), until new legislation in the mid-1960s unintentionally precipitated the waves of low-skilled immigration that we now see. The new law, which the Kennedy administration introduced as a civil rights measure that would abolish the supposedly racist national-origin quotas and give preference to immigrants with family members already in the United States, would, supporters claimed, make U.S. immigration policy fairer but would have little impact on levels of migration. Instead, the law had far-reaching unanticipated consequences, dramatically increasing the immigration of unskilled workers from poorer countries. From the 1950s to the 1970s, immigration from Asia soared tenfold, and from Africa fivefold, while newcomers from Central and South America doubled.

Today, when success in our economy requires ever more skills and education, the vast majority of immigrants arrive without the skills or the education to fit in easily anywhere except at the lowest economic rung. A study by Harvard economists George Borjas and Lawrence Katz noted that 63 percent of Mexican immigrants are high school dropouts who on average earn 53 percent less than native workers when they enter the United States. Because such immigrants start so far behind, this income gap can persist for decades, research shows. Moreover, because so much of today's immigration now hails from just a few countries (Mexican immigrants now represent 30 percent of America's foreign-born population, whereas no *two* ethnic groups during the first great migration accounted for 25 percent), immigrants increasingly group in insulated communities of their own, where their children adopt the cultural attributes

. . . were mostly poor, like these children receiving gifts from charitable New Yorkers.



BROWN BROTHERS

of their home country rather than those of America. High school graduation rates among the American-born children of Hispanic immigrants are much lower than the average in the rest of the native-born population, while census surveys have begun to record growing numbers of native-born Hispanics who don't have English-language proficiency—nearly 3 million in the 2005 American Community Survey.

Meanwhile, the benefits of so much low-wage immigration to our economy are minimal and increasingly outweighed by the costs. Low-skilled immigrant workers have crowded into service jobs that do little to make America more competitive internationally or more productive: they deliver our pizzas, cut our lawns, wash our cars. True, these immigrants push down prices of services for middle-class Americans, but they also depress the wages of low-skilled native-born workers, according to Borjas and Katz, and recent studies show that they probably raise the unemployment levels of native-born blacks and Hispanics. Not surprisingly, a 1997 study by economists for the National Academy of Sciences estimated the net benefits of immigration at only $10 billion in our $8 trillion economy, while the next year an NAS study of the social costs of immigration reported that in California each native-born family paid nearly $1,200 more in taxes to support government services that went to immigrants. Those costs will only grow as the number of immigrants in America increases. The Heritage Institute's Robert Rector has estimated that each immigrant high school dropout will cost U.S. taxpayers $85,000 over his lifetime. Enacting amnesty for illegals already here, as well as creating a new guest-worker program, Rector calculates, would eventually add some $46 billion a year in social costs—including welfare—to the federal government.

As America has grappled with its increasingly costly immigration, other developed countries have transformed the way they think about immigration, placing more emphasis on economic considerations and the cultural capital that immigrants bring with them. Like the United States, Australia for much of its history had an immigration policy based on race and nationality. But the country's slowing economic performance in the mid-1980s prompted the government to rethink its policies. The result: a skills-based immigration approach that welcomes workers who have the experience and training in jobs that the economy needs, posted on the so-called Australian Migration Occupations in Demand List. The new policy recognizes that from an economic point of view, not all workers are equal. Among the most sought-after workers in recent years have been accountants, nurses, and tradesmen, including mechanics and electricians. To qualify for a visa to work at a job on the MODL, potential immigrants must show that they have the right skills, workforce experience, English-language proficiency, and age. Those over 45 cannot gain permanent skills-based residency, because their contribution to the Australian economy will be too brief to offset the social costs that they will impose on society.

The policy has led to a dramatic shift in the nature of Australian immigration. Whereas in 1993 70 percent of all immigration was based on family relations, today 70 percent of Australia's permanent visas go to skilled workers. As a result, Australian immigrants do far better than American immigrants. A 2006 study by the Australian Productivity Commission (roughly the equivalent of our Government Accountability Office) shows that on average Australian immigrants earn about 6 percent more than the median income of the native-born population, because immigrants typically have higher levels of education and skills. Even Australian immigrants in the country for less than five years earn 4 percent more than the native-born. By contrast, because the preponderance of low-skilled workers pulls the average down, American immigrants earn 20 percent less than the median native-born worker. The shift toward welcoming more skilled immigration has prompted the Australian government to declare that it is winning the worldwide contest for

The immigrants came for American opportunity, not welfare benefits, and they brought a determination to succeed . . .

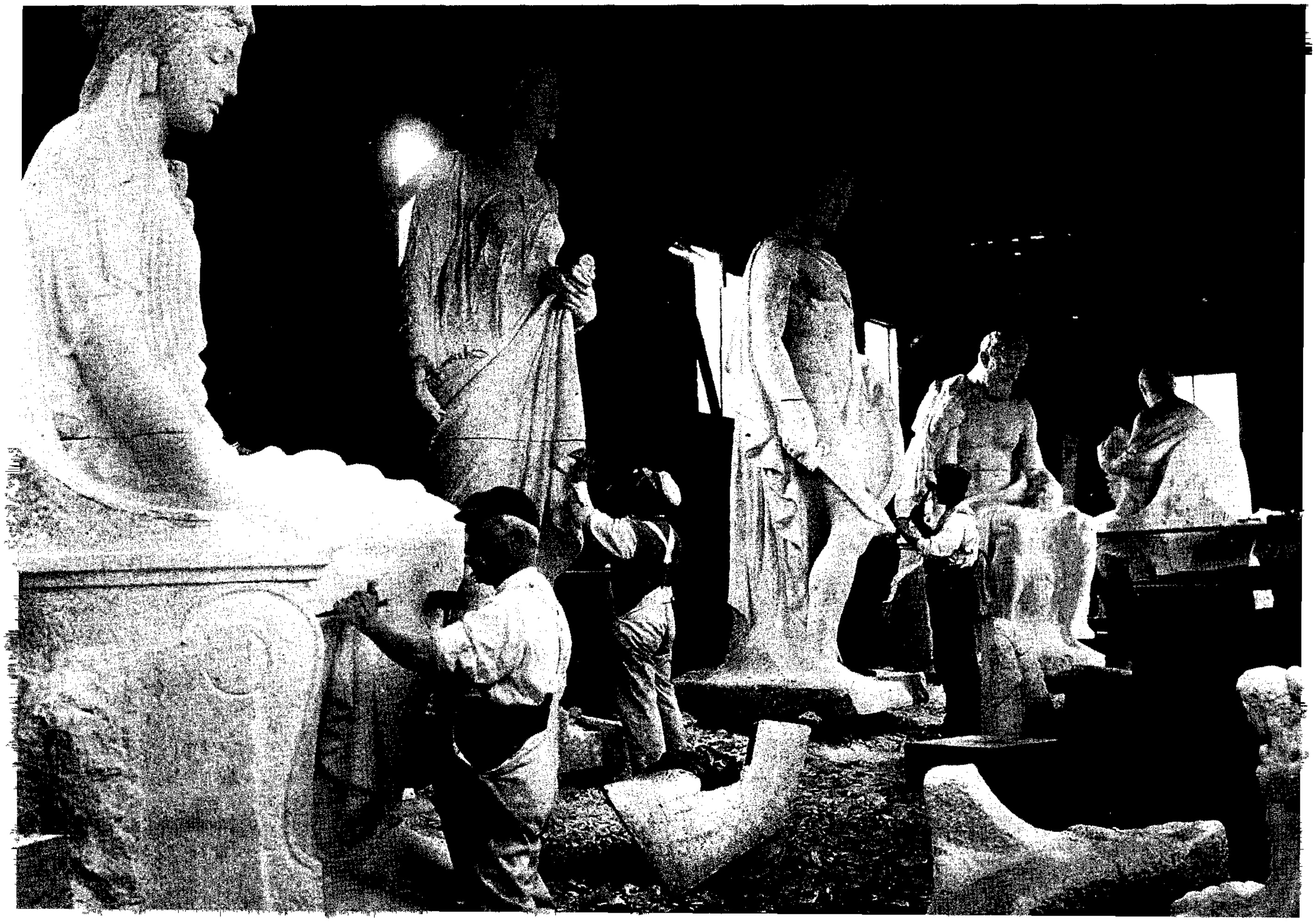
LEWIS W. HINE/GETTY IMAGES

better-trained workers: "We are beating the U.S., Canada, and New Zealand," Australia's former immigration minister (and now attorney general), Philip Ruddock, has boasted.

Other countries have adopted a similar skills-based approach. Canada, for instance, gives would-be immigrants additional "points" for advanced educational degrees and for knowing both French and English. But because the country does not try to match immigrants to specific jobs shortages the way Australia does, some highly educated immigrants—especially those from Asian and Latin American countries, according to a recent study—find it difficult to get jobs in their professional fields once they arrive in Canada. Moreover, Canada's emphasis on education without reference to what the labor market needs has prompted frustration in industries like construction, which has shortages of skilled workers. As a result, immigrants in Canada, on average, earn less than native-born workers.

Ireland has taken yet a third approach, letting employers select candidates for visas and prohibiting immigrants from shifting jobs once they arrive, unless they can find another business to sponsor them. Ireland's approach aims to manage surges of immigration that result from the dramatic growth of the country's economy, thanks to the heroic tax cuts and deregulation of the early 1990s. From being an exporter of emigrants for much of its history, Ireland became a net importer of immigrants as capital rushed in from around the world and unemployment rates fell from nearly 16 percent to about 5 percent by the end of the decade.

. . . and skills the economy needed, like these Italian stone carvers in Wisconsin in 1912 . . .



LEWIS W. HINE/GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE/GETTY IMAGES

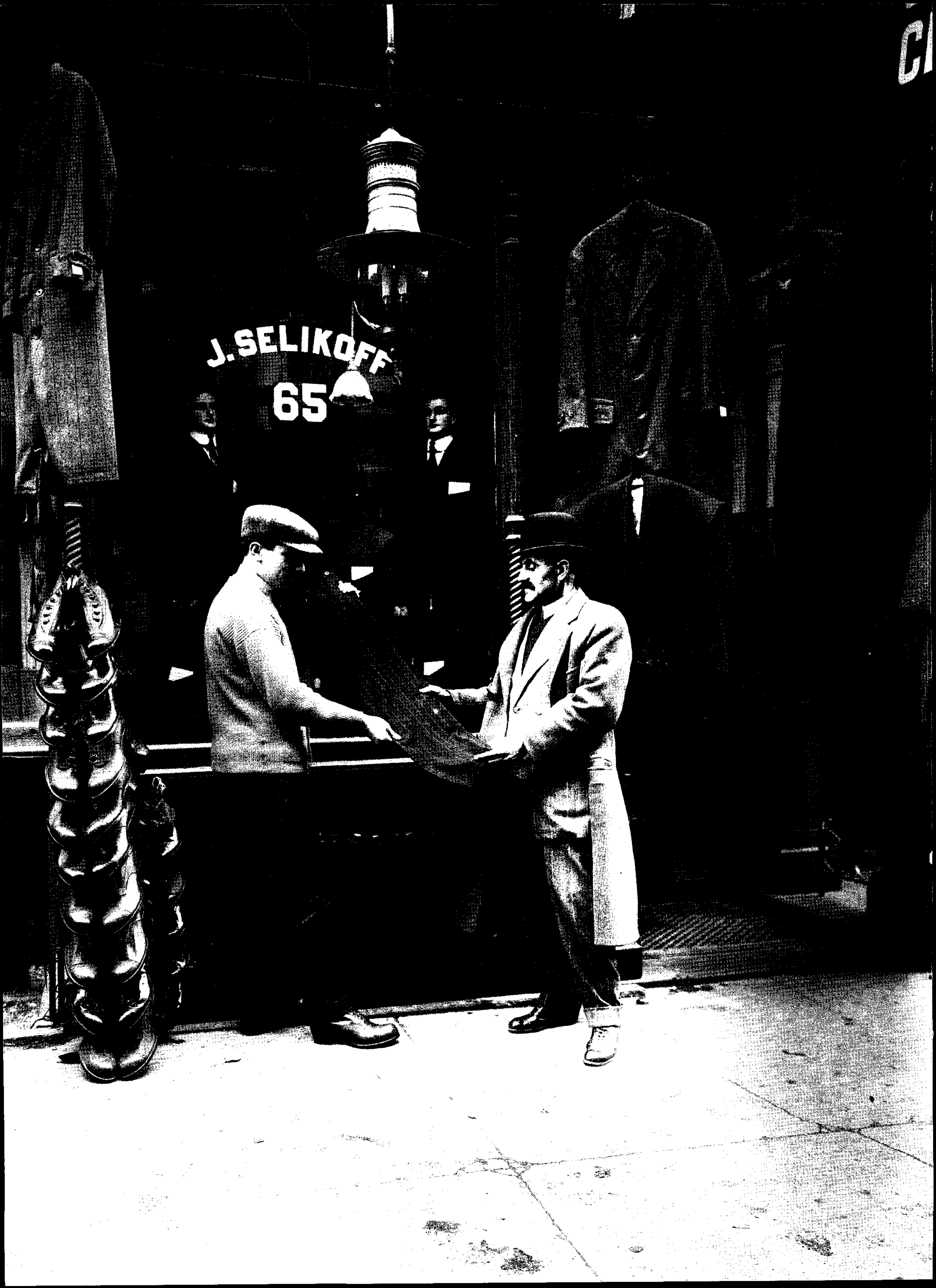
. . . or these Jewish garment workers, who created America's clothing industry.

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

As newcomers poured into the country, Ireland reshaped its policy to prevent unskilled workers from flooding its labor markets. So that employers don't import immigrants in occupations where workers are already plentiful, aiming to drive down wages, Ireland won't grant visas in job categories for which market surveys deem the labor supply adequate. Virtually all the jobs for which the country currently won't grant work visas—from hotel workers to retail salespeople to clerical staff—are low-skilled. Ireland requires that employers try to fill vacancies in those jobs from Ireland itself or with workers from other E.U. countries, who can migrate to Ireland without restriction. As a result, 25 percent of the country's immigration hails from E.U. members Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

The other half of a sound immigration policy is to eliminate the magnet effect of modern welfare programs. Developed countries uniformly prohibit illegal aliens from receiving social benefits, and many restrict those benefits for legals, too. Australia, for instance, prohibits legal immigrants from participating in social programs for two years. Immigrants in Canada who qualify for a skilled-worker visa must show a bank account of at least $9,420 (Canadian) before entering the country, to ensure that they won't become an immediate burden on the welfare system. Canadian residents who want to sponsor a relative under the country's family reunification program must also prove that they have the resources to support the immigrant. (America makes a similar demand that those who sponsor immigrants pledge to support them in case of need, but it doesn't require sponsors to honor the promise.)

Similarly, Ireland restricts legal immigrants from receiving many social welfare benefits. Moreover, in 2004 Irish citizens voted to amend their constitution to stop granting automatic citizenship to children born in the country of foreign parents, after widespread reports that immigrants were flying to Dublin to give birth, because Irish law allowed the parents to take up residence in the country with their citizen-child thereafter. Now at least one parent must be legally resident in Ireland for three out of the four years before the child's birth for their baby to become a citizen.


J. SELIKOFF
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Welfare-benefit restrictions are an acknowledgment that the economic calculus of immigration has changed dramatically. Before the welfare state, which developed countries have all embraced to some degree, immigrants came to a country like the United States because its free-enterprise system gave them an opportunity to succeed—but not a guarantee. Those who failed often returned home, and one reason why studies showed that immigrants did so well during the first great migration is that those who came were the most enterprising and those who stayed were the most skilled at adapting to our economy.

But today, the modern welfare state has turned the self-selection process upside down, offering immigrants from very poor countries incentives to come to America and sponge off the taxpayers, reaping where they did not sow. Today's immigrants are more than twice as likely to use government programs as native-born Americans. As Nobel laureate Milton Friedman has said: "It's just obvious that you can't have free immigration and a welfare state."

> **"Before welfare, immigrants came to the U.S. because it gave them a chance to succeed—but not a guarantee."**

The experience of other countries provides clear guidelines for the kind of immigration policy that the United States should adopt. And as early as the 1990s, a bipartisan congressional commission on immigration reform sketched out some of the reform's essential principles. It concluded, based on recommendations from leading economists, that the United States should stop admitting unskilled workers into the country, because there was no widespread need for them, and that such immigration was not "in the national interest." It further recommended that the country should not institute any guest-worker programs for industries like agriculture, because such programs "effectively expand rural poverty" by importing large numbers of very low-paid workers. The commission also recommended that the U.S. reduce total immigration levels by one-third to assimilate better those who *are* coming and to reduce the costs of immigration on our society. Though the Republican-controlled Congress and President Clinton initially accepted the commission's work, both parties backed off when political opposition arose from an unusual alliance of business interests, open-borders ideologues, ethnic and racial activists, and Mexican politicians.

Nonetheless, the U.S. should now try to push through the reforms that the commission's economists suggested and that the experience of other nations has proven to be beneficial. The first step is to acknowledge that our family unification policy, our current immigration law's centerpiece, not only does not serve our economy but goes way beyond preserving the nuclear family. Current law allows not only the spouses and minor children of permanent residents and American citizens—both native-born and naturalized—to come here, but also their adult sons and daughters, as well as the parents and adult siblings of citizens. This chain of relations accounts for some 600,000 legal visas a year and has prompted a backlog of some 4 million visa applicants. By restricting the family unification category to the spouses and minor children of citizens, the United States could cut family unification visas in half.

Reducing family visas would allow for a shift toward skills-based immigration without increasing the number of newcomers. To determine what kinds of workers would receive skills-based visas, the United States would shift away from its current system in which those visas—totaling only 77,000 last year—now almost entirely go to highly educated workers, such as technology specialists, whom companies request, but not to

With their urban experience, immigrants succeeded at retailing . . .

BROWN BROTHERS

skilled tradesmen who might also be in short supply. Under a revised system, while companies could continue to request visas for workers they need, the U.S. would also award visas based on the model of Australia's Migration Occupation Demands List, compiled through labor-market surveys. In Australia, that list currently is heavily weighted toward trades like automotive electricians, boilermakers, machinists, toolmakers, and welders. The U.S. Labor Department's list of more than 200 of the fastest-growing job categories includes many similar trades, but potential immigrants with those skills have virtually no way of getting into the country legally unless they are high on the family reunification list. An immigration policy designed to strengthen the U.S. economy would bump workers in such fast-growing trade categories to the top of visa lists. By reorienting immigration toward more skilled workers, the United States would probably diversify its immigration flow and could eliminate its so-called diversity category, which grants 50,000 visas a year to winners of a lottery.

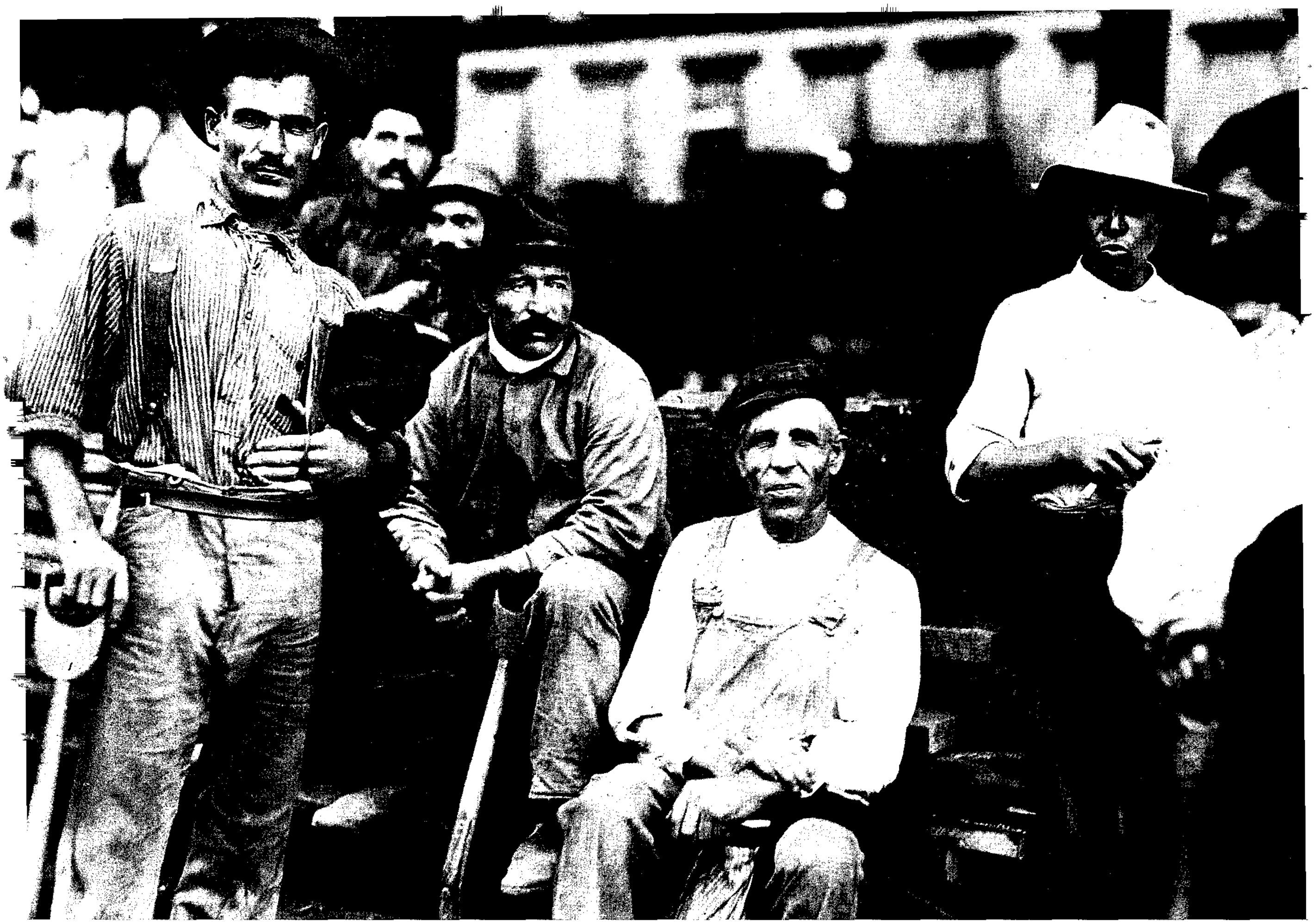
For these changes to have much impact, the nation will have to get much tougher on illegal immigration, now about a quarter of all immigration and almost entirely unskilled. Though hardening the border is important, the real key is to lessen the economic incentives to sneak into the U.S. by ensuring that businesses don't hire workers they know to be illegal and that government doesn't provide them with services and benefits. The 1990s commission on immigration reform recommended establishing a national database for employers to verify the Social Security numbers of their workers. Now is the time to do it.

Though eliminating economic incentives will stem the flow of illegals and send many home, stricter enforcement also means more deportations. Although open-borders proponents argue that the United States can never deport all of the estimated 11 million immigrants here—something it would never be necessary to do—it is nevertheless a fundamental principle of policing that failing to enforce laws spurs more illegal activity, while stepped-up enforcement discourages it. Canada has followed this policy, beefing up its Border Services Agency and increasing deportations, estimated to rise to about 10,000 this year in an illegal population of about 200,000. By comparison, the U.S. deports some 50,000 annually out of its 11 million-strong illegal population.

Reducing economic incentives, of course, entails eliminating government benefits to illegals. Though the federal government bans illegal aliens from receiving many benefits, several states and cities have made themselves immigrant havens by providing government services through a don't-ask, don't-tell policy. New York City, for instance, offers immigrants, regardless of their status, such benefits as government-sponsored health insurance, preventive medical care, and counseling programs. Some states have moved to ensure that illegals receive in-state tuition discounts to state colleges, even though out-of-state American citizens don't qualify for those discounts. Although the states administer many of these services, they are often supported by funding from the federal government, which should move to withhold all funds from state and municipal programs that openly provide services to illegals. Immigration is a federal issue, and individual states and cities cannot have their own policies.

Finally, the United States should begin a debate on whether to stop granting citizenship to anyone born here of foreign parents—a right that no E.U. country grants. The right springs from the first sentence of the Fourteenth Amendment, passed after the Civil War to ensure that states did not deny citizenship to former slaves. The framers of the amendment did not mean it to apply to the children of noncitizens who happen to be born here, though the Supreme Court has interpreted it that way, because its language does not specifically exclude those children. America has never had a discussion about whether we want to extend citizenship to these children, and now is the time to begin that conversation. Currently, the children of our 11 million illegal aliens automatically become citizens with the right to apply for visas for their parents and siblings to immigrate here legally. And they

LOUIS W. HINE/THE GRANGER COLLECTION



. . . and they built essential infrastructure, like these New York street construction workers in 1910.

have the right to government benefits, including "child-only" welfare payments, which vary greatly by state but can amount to up to $500 a month for two children in California.

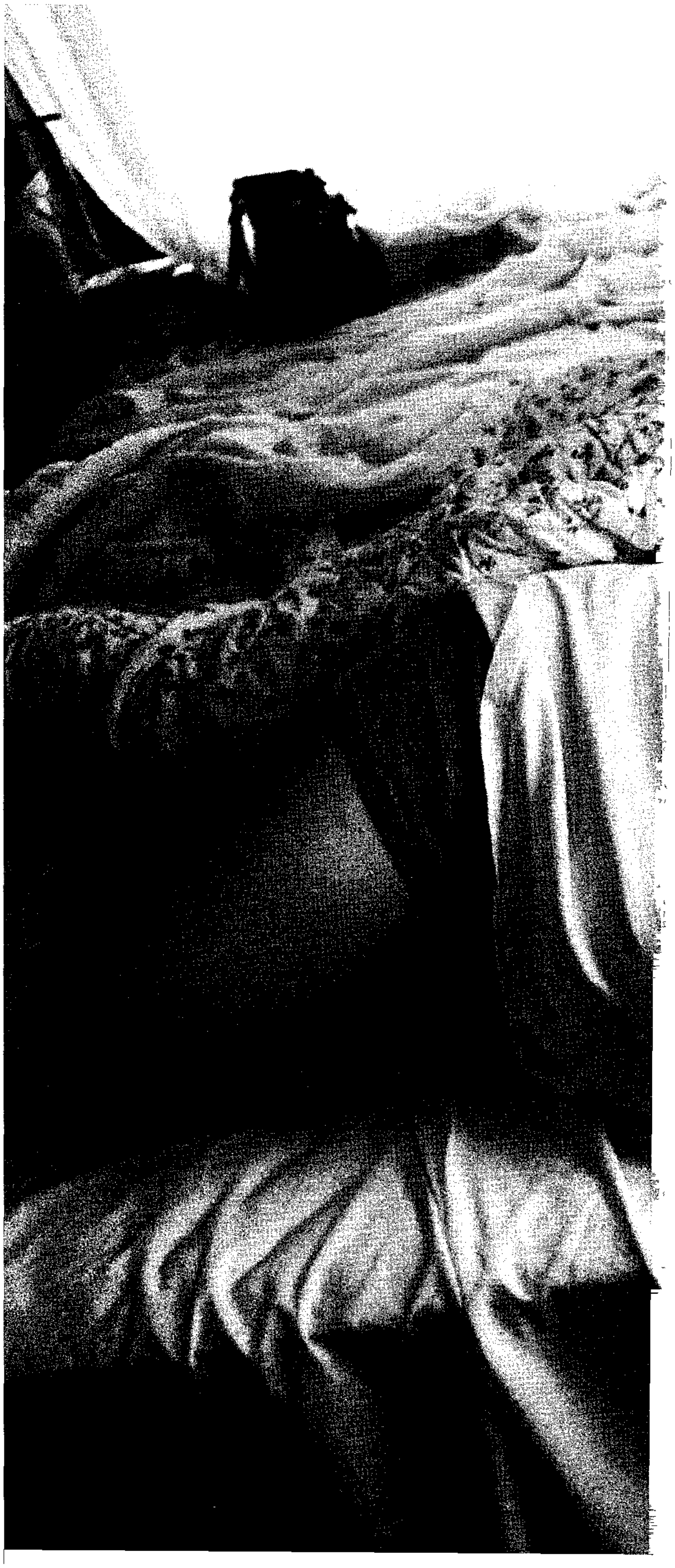
Reordering our immigration policies in this way would give a big boost to our economy. Not only do skilled workers create more wealth than unskilled ones, but studies consistently show that economies make more productive use of skilled workers, since businesses invest more in new machinery and equipment when skilled labor is available. And of course better-paid, skilled workers are unlikely to need taxpayer-funded social programs. Meanwhile, lower-income Americans, who now suffer from the depressing effect that unskilled immigration has on their wages, would also benefit, because their pay would rise.

Such a policy shift would also diversify our stream of newcomers, as it did Australia's, and help ensure that immigrants continue to assimilate economically and culturally. Today's family-based immigration policy has resulted in millions of Hispanic immigrants living in insulated, unassimilated ethnic communities, where their children retain the characteristics of their immigrant culture, including out-of-wedlock child-bearing and a low valuation of education. A reformed immigration policy would result in fewer such enclaves, where the ethnic capital handed down by one generation to the next is out of step with what it takes to succeed in the American economy.

America's current immigration policy doesn't satisfy the majority of our own citizens, who say in polls by a two-to-one margin that they would like to see immigration levels decreased. Our immigration law is also out of step with how other countries that are economic powerhouses have ordered their own policy. Our debate revolves around a law that is an anachronism, formulated 50 years ago to sanitize U.S. policy of any hints of racism or nativism and resulting in far-reaching, unintended negative consequences. Now it's time to move the discussion into the twenty-first century.

Hispanic Family Values?

Runaway illegitimacy is creating a new U.S. underclass.



JANET JARMAN/CORBIS

Some 45 percent of all Hispanic births in the U.S. occur outside of marriage, like the child these two 17-year-olds in Texas are expecting.

Heather Mac Donald

Unless the life chances of children raised by single mothers suddenly improve, the explosive growth of the U.S. Hispanic population over the next couple of decades does not bode well for American social stability. Hispanic immigrants bring near–Third World levels of fertility to

America, coupled with what were once thought to be First World levels of illegitimacy. (In fact, family breakdown is higher in many Hispanic countries than here.) Nearly half of the children born to Hispanic mothers in the U.S. are born out of wedlock, a proportion that has been increasing rapidly with no signs of slowing down. Given what psychologists and sociologists now know about the much higher likelihood of social pathology among those who grow up in single-mother households, the Hispanic baby boom is certain to produce more juvenile delinquents, more school failure, more welfare use, and more teen pregnancy in the future.

The government social-services sector has already latched onto this new client base; as the Hispanic population expands, so will the demands for a larger welfare state. Since conservative open-borders advocates have yet to acknowledge the facts of Hispanic family breakdown, there is no way to know what their solution to it is. But they had better come up with one quickly, because the problem is here—and growing.

The dimensions of the Hispanic baby boom are startling. The Hispanic birthrate is twice as high as that of the rest of the American population. That high fertility rate—even more than unbounded levels of immigration—will fuel the rapid Hispanic population boom in the coming decades. By 2050, the Latino population will have tripled, the Census Bureau projects. One in four Americans will be Hispanic by mid-century, twice the current ratio. In states such as California and Texas, Hispanics will be in the clear majority. Nationally, whites will drop from near 70 percent of the total population in 2000 to just half by 2050. Hispanics will account for 46 percent of the nation's added population over the next two decades, the Pew Hispanic Center reports.

But it's the fertility surge among *unwed* Hispanics that should worry policymakers. Hispanic women have the highest unmarried birthrate in the country—over three times that of whites and Asians, and nearly one and a half times that of black women, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Every 1,000 unmarried Hispanic women bore 92 children in 2003 (the latest year for which data exist), compared with 28 children for every 1,000 unmarried white women, 22 for every 1,000 unmarried Asian women, and 66 for every 1,000 unmarried black women. Forty-five percent of all Hispanic births occur outside of marriage, compared with 24 percent of white births and 15 percent of Asian births. Only the percentage of black out-of-wedlock births—68 percent—exceeds the Hispanic rate. But the black population is not going to triple over the next few decades.

As if the unmarried Hispanic birthrate weren't worrisome enough, it is increasing faster than among other groups. It jumped 5 percent from 2002 to 2003, whereas the rate for other unmarried women remained flat. Couple the high and increasing illegitimacy rate of Hispanics with their higher overall fertility rate, and you have a recipe for unstoppable family breakdown.

The only bright news in this demographic disaster story concerns teen births. Overall teen childbearing in the U.S. declined for the 12th year in a row in 2003, having dropped by more than a third since 1991. Yet even here, Hispanics remain a cause for concern. The rate of childbirth for Mexican teenagers, who come from by far the largest and fastest-growing immigrant population, greatly outstrips every other group. The Mexican teen birthrate is 93 births per every 1,000 girls, compared with 27 births for every 1,000 white girls, 17 births for every 1,000 Asian girls, and 65 births for every 1,000 black girls. To put these numbers into international perspective, Japan's teen birthrate is 3.9, Italy's is 6.9, and France's is 10. Even though the outsize U.S. teen birthrate is dropping, it continues to inflict unnecessary costs on the country, to which Hispanics contribute disproportionately.

To grasp the reality behind those numbers, one need only talk to people working on the front lines of family breakdown. Social workers in Southern California, the national epicenter for illegal Hispanic immigrants and their progeny, are in despair over the epidemic of single parenting. Not only has illegitimacy become perfectly acceptable, they say, but so has the resort to welfare and social services to cope with it.

Dr. Ana Sanchez delivers babies at St. Joseph's Hospital in the city of Orange, California, many of them to Hispanic teenagers. To her dismay, they view having a child at their age as normal. A recent patient just had her second baby at age 17; the baby's father is in jail. But what is "most alarming," Sanchez says, is that the "teens' parents view having babies outside of marriage as normal, too. A lot of the grandmothers are single as well; they never married, or they had successive partners. So the mom sends the message to her daughter that it's okay to have children out of wedlock."

> **"The childbirth rate for Mexican teens, who come from the largest immigrant population, outstrips all other groups."**

Sanchez feels almost personally involved in the problem: "I'm Hispanic myself. I wish I could find out what the Asians are doing right." She guesses that Asian parents' passion for education inoculates their children against teen pregnancy and the underclass trap. "Hispanics are not picking that up like the Asian kids," she sighs.

Conservatives who support open borders are fond of invoking "Hispanic family values" as a benefit of unlimited Hispanic immigration. Marriage is clearly no longer one of those family values. But other kinds of traditional Hispanic values have survived—not all of them necessarily ideal in a modern economy, however. One of them is the importance of having children early and often. "It's considered almost a badge of honor for a young girl to have a baby," says Peggy Schulze of Chrysalis House, an adoption agency in Fresno. (Fresno has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in California, typical of the state's heavily Hispanic farm districts.) It is almost impossible to persuade young single Hispanic mothers to give up their children for adoption, Schulze says. "The attitude is: 'How could you give away your baby?' I don't know how to break through."

The most powerful Hispanic family value—the tight-knit extended family—facilitates unwed child rearing. A single mother's relatives often step in to make up for the absence of the baby's father. I asked Mona, a 19-year-old parishioner at St. Joseph's Church in Santa Ana, California, if she knew any single mothers. She laughed: "There are so many I can't even name them." Two of her cousins, aged 25 and 19, have children without having husbands. The situation didn't seem to trouble this churchgoer too much. "They'll be strong enough to raise them. It's totally okay with us," she said. "We're very close; we're there to support them. They'll do just fine."

As Mona's family suggests, out-of-wedlock child rearing among Hispanics is by no means confined to the underclass. The St. Joseph's parishioners are precisely the churchgoing, blue-collar workers whom open-borders conservatives celebrate. Yet this community is as susceptible as any other to illegitimacy. Fifty-year-old Irma and her husband, Rafael, came legally from Mexico in the early 1970s. Rafael works in a meatpacking plant in Brea; they have raised five husky boys who attend church with them. Yet Irma's sister—a homemaker like herself, also married to a factory hand—is now the grandmother of two illegitimate children, one by each daughter. "I saw nothing in the way my sister and her husband raised her children to explain it," Irma says. "She gave them everything." One of the fathers of Irma's young nieces has four other children by a variety of different mothers. His construction wages are being garnished for child support, but he is otherwise not involved in raising his children.

The fathers of these illegitimate children are often problematic in even more troubling ways. Social workers report that the impregnators of younger Hispanic women are with some regularity their uncles, not necessarily seen as a bad thing by the mother's family. Alternatively, the father may be the boyfriend of the girl's mother, who then continues to stay with the grandmother. Older men seek out young girls in the belief that a virgin cannot get pregnant during her first intercourse, and to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.

The tradition of starting families young and expanding them quickly can come into conflict with more modern American mores. Ron Storm, the director of the Hillview Acres foster-care home in Chino, tells of a 15-year-old girl who was taken away from the 21-year-old father of her child by a local child-welfare department. The boyfriend went to jail, charged with rape. But the girl's parents complained about the agency's interference, and eventually both the girl and her boyfriend ended up going back to Mexico, presumably to have more children. "At 15, as the Quinceañera tradition celebrates, you're considered ready for marriage," says Storm. Or at least for childbearing; the marriage part is disappearing.

"'It's now all about getting girls pregnant when you're age 15,' says an Orange County sheriff's deputy."

But though older men continue to take advantage of younger women, the age gap between the mother and the father of an illegitimate child is quickly closing. Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernardino Counties tries to teach young fathers to take responsibility for their children. "We're seeing a lot more 13- and 14-year-old fathers," says Kathleen Collins, v.p. of health education. The day before we spoke, Scott Montoya, an Orange County sheriff's deputy, arrested two 14-year-old boys who were bragging about having sexual relations with a cafeteria worker from an Olive Garden restaurant. "It's now all about getting girls pregnant when you're age 15," he says. One 18-year-old in the Planned Parenthood fathers' program has two children by two different girls and is having sex with five others, says health worker Jason Warner. "A lot of [the adolescent sexual behavior] has to do with getting respect from one's peers," observes Warner.

Normally, the fathers, of whatever age, take off. "The father may already be married or in prison or doing drugs," says Amanda Gan, director of operations for Toby's House, a maternity home in Dana Point, California. Mona, the 19-year-old parishioner at St. Joseph's Church, says that the boys who impregnated her two cousins are "nowhere to be found." Her family knows them but doesn't know if they are working or in jail.

Two teen mothers at the Hillview Acres home represent the outer edge of Hispanic family dysfunction. Yet many aspects of their lives are typical. Though these teenagers' own mothers were unusually callous and irresponsible, the social milieu in which they were raised is not unusual.

Irene's round, full face makes her look younger than her 14 years, certainly too young to be a mother. But her own mother's boyfriend repeatedly forced sex on her, with the mother's acquiescence. The result was Irene's baby, Luz. Baby Luz has an uncle her own age, Irene's new 13-month-old brother. Like Irene, Irene's mother had her first child at 14, and produced five more over the next 16 years, all of whom went into foster care. Irene's father committed suicide before she was old enough to know him. The four fathers of her siblings are out of the picture, too: one of them, the father of her seven-year-old brother and five-year-old sister, was

Still in high school, this teen mother is expecting again.

DAVID YOUNG-WOLFF/PHOTOEDIT, INC.

deported back to Mexico after he showed up drunk for a visit with his children, in violation of his probation conditions.

Irene is serene and articulate—remarkably so, considering that in her peripatetic early life in Orange County she went to school maybe twice a week. She likes to sing and to read books that are sad, she says, especially books by Dave Pelzer, a child-abuse victim who has published three best-selling memoirs about his childhood trauma. She says she will never get married: "I don't want another man in my life. I don't want that experience again."

Eighteen-year-old Jessica at least escaped rape, but her family experiences were bad enough. The large-limbed young woman, whose long hair is pulled back tightly from her heart-shaped face, grew up in the predominantly Hispanic farming community of Indio in the Coachella Valley. She started "partying hard" in fifth grade, she says—at around the same time that her mother, separated from her father, began using drugs and going clubbing. By the eighth grade, Jessica and her mother were drinking and smoking marijuana together. Jessica's family had known her boyfriend's family since she was four; when she had her first child by him—she was 14 and he was 21—her mother declared philosophically that she had always known that it would happen. "It was okay with her, so long as he continued to give her drugs."

Jessica originally got pregnant to try to clean up her life, she says. "I knew what I was doing was not okay, so having a baby was a way for me to stop doing what I was doing. In that sense, the baby was planned." She has not used drugs since her first pregnancy, though she occasionally drinks. After her daughter was born, she went to live with her boyfriend in a filthy trailer without plumbing; they scrounged food from dumpsters, despite the income from his illegal drug business. They planned to get married, but by the time she got pregnant again with a son, "We were having a lot of problems. We'd be holding hands, and he'd be looking at other girls. I didn't want him to touch me." Eventually, the county welfare agency removed her and put her in foster care with her two children.

Both Jessica and her caddish former boyfriend illustrate the evanescence of the celebrated Hispanic "family values." Her boyfriend's family could not be more traditional. Two years ago, Jessica went back to Mexico to celebrate her boyfriend's parents' 25th wedding anniversary and the renewal of their wedding vows. Jessica's own mother got married at 15 to her father, who was ten years her senior. Her father would not let his wife work; she was a "stay-at-home wife," Jessica says. But don't blame the move to the U.S. for the behavior of younger generations; the family crack-up is happening even faster in Latin America.

Jessica's mother may have been particularly negligent, but Jessica's experiences are not so radically different from those of her peers. "Everybody's having babies now," she says. "The Coachella Valley is filled with girls' pregnancies. Some girls live with their babies' dads; they consider them their husbands." These cohabiting relationships rarely last, however, and a new cohort of fatherless children goes out into the world.

Despite the strong family support, the prevalence of single parenting among Hispanics is producing the inevitable slide into the welfare system. "The girls aren't marrying the guys, so they are married to the state," Dr. Sanchez observes. Hispanics now dominate the federal Women, Infants, and Children free food program; Hispanic enrollment grew over 25 percent from 1996 to 2002, while black enrollment dropped 12 percent and white enrollment dropped 6.5 percent. Illegal immigrants can get WIC and other welfare programs for their American-born children. If Congress follows President Bush's urging and grants amnesty to most of the 11 million illegal aliens in the country today, expect the welfare rolls to skyrocket as the parents themselves become eligible.

Amy Braun works for Mary's Shelter, a home for young single mothers who are homeless or in crisis, in Orange County, California. It has become "culturally okay" for the Hispanic population to use the shelter and welfare system, Braun says. A case manager at a program for pregnant homeless women in the city of Orange observes the same acculturation to the social-services sector, with its grievance mongering and sense of victimhood. "I'll have women in my office on their fifth child, when the others have already been placed in foster care," says Anita Berry of Casa Teresa. "There's nothing shameful about having multiple children that you can't care for, and to be pregnant again, because then you can blame the system."

The consequences of family breakdown are now being passed down from one generation to the next, in an echo of the black underclass. "The problems are deeper and wider," says Berry. "Now you're getting the second generation of foster care and group home residents. The dysfunction is multigenerational."

"The prevalence of single parenting among Hispanics is producing the inevitable slide into the welfare system."

The social-services complex has responded with barely concealed enthusiasm to this new flood of clients. As Hispanic social problems increase, so will the government sector that ministers to them. In July, a *New York Times* editorial, titled YOUNG LATINAS AND A CRY FOR HELP, pointed out the elevated high school dropout rates and birthrates among Hispanic girls. A quarter of all Latinas are mothers by the age of 20, reported the *Times*. With the usual melodrama that accompanies the pitch for more government services, the *Times* designated young Latinas as "endangered" in the same breath that it disclosed that they are one of the fastest-growing segments of the population. "The time to help is now," said the *Times*—by which it means ratcheting up the taxpayer-subsidized social-work industry.

In response to the editorial, Carmen Barroso, regional director of International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region, proclaimed in a letter to the editor the "urgent need for health care providers, educators and advocates to join the sexual and reproductive health movement to ensure the fundamental right to services for young Latinas."

Wherever these "fundamental rights" might come from, Barroso's call nevertheless seems quite superfluous, since there is no shortage of taxpayer-funded "services" for troubled Latinas—or Latinos. The schools in California's San Joaquin Valley have day care for their students' babies, reports Peggy Schulze of Chrysalis House. "The girls get whatever they need—welfare, medical care." Advocates for young unwed moms in New York's South Bronx are likewise agitating for more day-care centers in high schools there, reports *El Diario/La Prensa*. A bill now in Congress, the Latina Adolescent Suicide Prevention Act, aims to channel $10 million to "culturally competent" social agencies to improve the self-esteem of Latina girls and to provide "support services" to their families and friends if they contemplate suicide.

The trendy "case management" concept, in which individual "cases" become the focal point around which a solar system of social workers revolves, has even reached heavily Hispanic elementary and middle schools. "We have a coordinator, who brings in a collaboration of agencies to deal with the issues that don't allow a student to meet his academic goals, such as domestic violence or drugs," explains Sylvia Rentria, director of the Family Resource Center at Berendo Middle School in Los Angeles. "We can provide individual therapy." Rentria offers the same program at nearby Hoover Elementary School for up to 100 students.

This July, Rentria launched a new session of Berendo's Violence Intervention Program for parents of children who are showing signs of gang involvement and other antisocial behavior. Ghady M., 55 and a "madre soltera" (single mother), like most of the mothers in the program, has been called in because her 16-year-old son, Christian, has been throwing gang signs at school, cutting half his classes, and ending up in the counseling office every day. The illegal Guatemalan is separated from her partner, who was "muy malo," she says; he was probably responsible for her many missing teeth. (The detectives in the heavily Hispanic Rampart Division of the Los Angeles Police Department, which includes the Berendo school, spend inordinate amounts of time on domestic violence cases.) Though Ghady used to work in a factory on Broadway in downtown L.A.—often referred to as Little Mexico City—she now collects $580 in welfare payments and $270 in food stamps for her two American-born children.

Christian is a husky smart aleck in a big white T-shirt; his fashionably pomaded hair stands straight up. He goes to school but doesn't do homework, he grins; and though he is not in a gang, he says, he has friends who are. Keeping Ghady and Christian company at the Violence Intervention Program is Ghady's grandniece, Carrie, a lively ten-year-old. Carrie lives with her 26-year-old mother but does not know her father, who also sired her 12-year-old brother. Her five-year-old brother has a different father.

Yet for all these markers of social dysfunction, fatherless Hispanic families differ from the black underclass in one significant area: many of the mothers and the absent fathers work, even despite growing welfare use. The former boyfriend of Jessica, the 18-year-old mother at the Hillview Acres foster home, works in construction and moonlights on insulation jobs; whether he still deals drugs is unknown. Jessica is postponing joining her father in Texas until she finishes high school, because once she moves in with him, she will feel obligated to get a job to help the family finances. The mother of Hillview's 14-year-old Irene used to fix soda machines in Anaheim, California, though she got fired because she was lazy, Irene says. Now, under court compulsion, she works in a Lunchables factory in Santa Ana, a condition of getting her children back from foster care. The 18-year-old Lothario and father of two, whom Planned Parenthood's Jason Warner is trying to counsel, works at a pet store. The mother of Carrie, the vivacious ten-year-old sitting in on Berendo Middle School's Violence Intervention Program, makes pizza at a Papa John's pizza outlet.

How these two value systems—a lingering work ethic and underclass mating norms—will interact in the future is anyone's guess. Orange County sheriff's deputy Montoya says that the older Hispanic generation's work ethic is fast disappearing among the gangbanging youngsters whom he sees. "Now, it's all about fast money, drugs, and sex." It may be that the willingness to work will plummet along with marriage rates, leading to even greater social problems than are now rife among Hispanics. Or it may be that the two contrasting practices will remain on parallel tracks, creating a new kind of underclass: a culture that tolerates free-floating men who impregnate women and leave, like the vast majority of black men, yet who still labor in the noncriminal economy. The question is whether, if the disposition to work remains relatively strong, a working parent will inoculate his or her illegitimate children against the worst degradations that plague black ghettos.

From an intellectual standpoint, this is a fascinating social experiment, one that academicians are—predictably—not attuned to. But the consequences will be more than intellectual: they may severely strain the social fabric. Nevertheless, it is an experiment that we seem destined to see to its end. Tisha Roberts, a supervisor at an Orange County, California, institution that assists children in foster care, has given up hope that the illegitimacy rate will taper off. "It's going to continue to grow," she says, "until we can put birth control in the water."

Silicon Alley 2.0

Gotham's digital economy didn't die after 9/11, and now it's roaring back.

Steven Malanga

When the Twin Towers fell, New York's digital economy, dubbed Silicon Alley, was a major economic casualty. True, the collapse of technology stocks the year before had already deflated Gotham's tech industries. But the 9/11 attack severely damaged Silicon Alley's geographic heart, lower Manhattan, transformed over the previous decade into a bustling high-tech district. After 9/11, hundreds of New York tech firms closed up shop; others survived by shrinking dramatically or selling themselves for only a small fraction of their sky-high valuations of the late 1990s. As many as half of New York's new media jobs vanished.

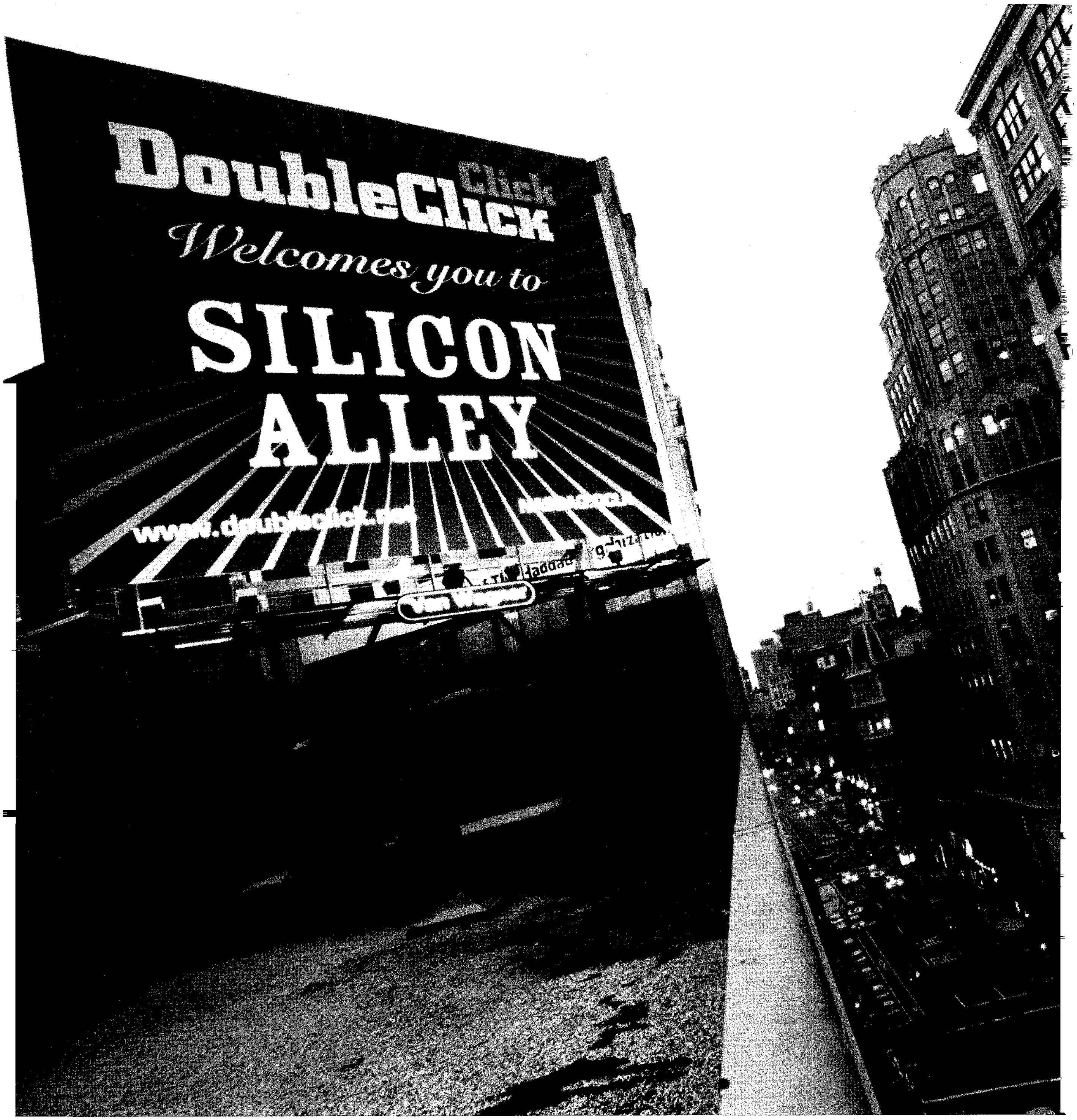
Nevertheless, Silicon Alley survived: and now—unexpectedly, even improbably—it is reemerging as an economic force in New York. Many of the hundreds of entrepreneurs and thousands of tech-savvy workers who flooded the city during the 1990s stuck around after 9/11, it turns out, and as Internet use becomes almost universal, these industry veterans are back with waves of new start-ups, catering to Internet surfers' demand for more online tools and interactivity or helping New York's mainstream industries do business better in the digital age. Their talent has grabbed the attention of industry leaders, who have made New York a key part of their worldwide networks.

"Ten years ago, you could have fit all of the entrepreneurs in New York in a taxicab," notes Kevin Ryan, cofounder of DoubleClick, one of the city's first successful Internet firms. "Today New York teems with entrepreneurs. Maybe we're not as deep as Silicon Valley, but we're probably ahead of most other places, and that's the city's strength."

As a center of big, Establishment corporations, New York seemed an unlikely player in the tech boom that began in the early 1990s. But as demand exploded for computer software content, a few visionary entrepreneurs came to the city and enlisted its vibrant community of artists, designers, and writers to create that content.

These New Media entrepreneurs launched companies like Voyager, which in 1994 started turning out educational and entertainment CD-ROMs, eventually employing 100 people in its SoHo headquarters. When computer users headed online, New York entrepreneurs followed them. Cable exec Candice Carpenter, for instance, started an Internet site for women, iVillage, staffed with talent from the city's publishing world. New York's mainstream media firms revved up their own digital divisions; by 1999, the *New York Times* employed 300 in its online department. And as big media digitized, more New Media firms sprang up to help, including DoubleClick, whose innovative software organized Web advertising. Excited investors poured billions into these start-ups, and Silicon Alley hiring soared, reaching around 140,000 people by 2000, PricewaterhouseCoopers estimated.

A gold-rush frenzy ensued, fueling unwise deals, such as the $10 million that venture funds sank into Manhattan game firm Interactive Imaginations, started by a 24-year-old whose previous entrepreneurial experience was running a dog-food delivery service. The company quickly burned through its cash without producing a viable business. After the tech bubble burst in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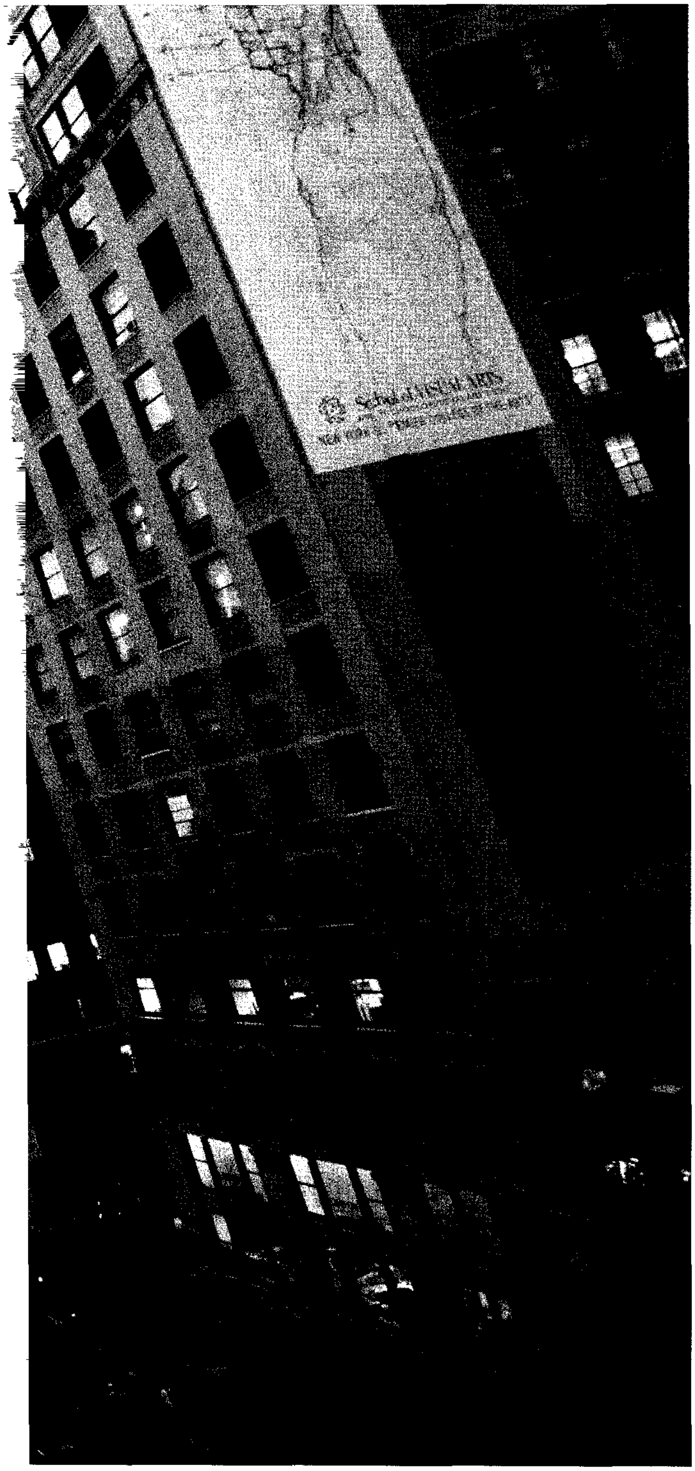


ERIK FREELAND/CORBIS SABA

2000, financing for such speculative ventures evaporated, leaving Silicon Alley reeling even before the terrorists struck.

Even so, many tech entrepreneurs who came to the city during the nineties didn't just pack up and go when the good times ended. They fought to save their companies, downsizing and refocusing them more successfully than many have realized. New York's 15 largest independent Internet firms before the crash, DoubleClick and iVillage among them, all survived the downturn, though shrunk or merged.

Gotham's big media firms also kept Silicon Alley alive. They ratcheted down their Internet ambitions after 9/11, of course; the *New York Times*, for instance, canceled a public offering of its New Media division. But as they watched the Internet become ever more popular, drawing away readers and ads, they invested in or acquired some of the city's top New Media firms. In two noteworthy post-9/11 deals, NBC bought iVillage—by 2005, it had expanded into an online community of some 19 million (mostly female) users—for $600 million, while the *Times* shelled out $410 million for the Manhattan-based search engine About.com.

Thanks in part to such investments, Silicon Alley stopped hemorrhaging employment by late 2004. Though it is hard to get an accurate figure of New Media jobs, since government surveys place some workers in more traditional employment categories, *City Journal* estimates that the industry shrank in New York by 30 to 50 percent during the post-9/11 recession, leaving a still-substantial 80,000 to 100,000 digital jobs, generating up to $8 billion in annual salaries.

As Silicon Alley struggled, a remarkable new Web world arose, attracting millions of users and revolutionizing the way Americans entertain themselves, shop, and do business. In the five years since 9/11, Internet usage in the U.S. has doubled, with many of the newest users flocking to so-called Web 2.0 sites: those that welcome user participation or interaction, or that enable people from around the country—

indeed, around the world—to find and join networks of those with similar interests.

No enterprise better captures the participatory Web 2.0 spirit than the raucous teen- and young-adult-oriented online meeting place MySpace.com, which *Wired* magazine vividly describes as the "biggest [online] mall-cum-nightclub-cum-7-Eleven parking lot ever created." Users provide MySpace's content, fashioning their own personal online portraits, filled with selections of favorite music and intimate photos, and often including blogs that chronicle their relationships, struggles in school, parent problems, and so on. Virtually unknown to the over-40 set, the Los Angeles–based firm has expanded with blinding speed since its 2003 launch, attracting some 20 million users a day, including many young artists and musicians who've used the site to distribute their work directly to fans—without corporate intermediaries. A vocalist in the Hollywood Undead band, which has no recording contract, exulted to the *New York Times* last year about the group's MySpace page: "We have 60,000 people who listen to it every day."

Those kind of eye-popping reports prompted Rupert Murdoch's New York–headquartered News Corp to plunk down $580 million last year to buy the site, seeing it as a herald of the Web's democratized future—and a way to promote the corporation's television shows, movies, newspapers, and other content to tens of millions of young people. Wall Street predicts that the site may be worth $15 billion in three years—not an unreasonable estimate, considering that Google just bought the video-sharing site YouTube for $1.65 billion.

Such monster deals have set off a race to create profitable Web 2.0 businesses—a knotty challenge, given the user-driven nature of this new cyberworld. Gotham's sizable cadre of experienced, tech-smart businessmen and workers give New York a powerful advantage in this race. Web 2.0 companies don't need to be in the city, of course; technologically, they could be anywhere. But a key lesson of the nineties is that Web entrepreneurs like being around others in their industry, and they've tended to cluster—or "agglomerate," in economist-speak—in a few metro regions. New York benefited from such an agglomeration in the nineties. Now, the digital community that remained in Gotham is clustering again into a Silicon Alley 2.0, with veterans of some of the nineties' most visible firms introducing an array of second-generation New Media enterprises.

For example, several former senior executives of Sixdegrees.com—founded in 1997 as one of the first firms to tap the Web's power to connect people, and sold three years later for $125 million—have recently launched start-ups in New York. One of the most promising is Fotolog—the MySpace of photo buffs. Debuted in 2002 by Adam Seifer, formerly Sixdegrees.com's chief operating officer, Fotolog initially consisted of families and friends sharing photos online. But the spread of cell-phone cameras changed it into a visual group blog, so to speak, with people taking snapshots of their daily lives and uploading them, creating a giant online photo journal. By September 2006, Fotolog—taking advantage of technological advances that marry wireless phones to the Web—boasted around 4.6 million registered users, posting nearly 200,000 photos daily to their personal webpages on the site or to hundreds of searchable Fotolog-hosted groups such as Coolcars and Tattooland.

Lately, Seifer's firm, which generates revenue by selling online ads and charging members for service enhancements, has hired away top-level talent from Liz Claiborne and Time Warner to bolster the site, which *BusinessWeek* named one of the "best of the web." Says Seifer: "People ask us all the time why we didn't move to Silicon Valley when this business took off, and I say, because in New York you are not just dealing with technogeeks; you can tap into an experienced community of executives."

One such executive, Sixdegrees.com cofounder and former investment banker Andrew Weinreich, has founded Istandfor.com, a Manhattan company that extends the Web 2.0 emphasis on social networking to politics. Clients such as Newark mayor Cory Booker and New York attorney general and gubernatorial candidate Eliot Spitzer have already hired the firm, which manages blogs for would-be officeholders, enlists online endorsements for them, and organizes supporters into online communities (Artists for Spitzer, for instance). "The common thread in these businesses is that they use technology to bring people together," says Weinreich.

Two more New York New Media veterans, former DoubleClick CEO Kevin Ryan and the company's ex–chief technology officer Dwight Merriman, have launched an innovative business that capitalizes on a key Web 2.0 feature: user contributions in the style of Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia written and edited entirely by readers. Ryan and Merriman's ShopWiki offers online buying guides for everything from women's clothing to electronic games, all written and updated by consumers themselves. It also features an advanced search engine that "crawls" around the Web gathering product information from more than 120,000 online stores, rather than relying on the stores to send the info, as with most online shopping services. The new firm is one of nearly a dozen that DoubleClick vets have started.

> **"Old Silicon Alley hands have helped transform blogging into a potentially lucrative e-publishing business."**

Old Silicon Alley hands have also helped transform blogging into a potentially lucrative e-publishing business. As everyone knows, blogs began in the 1990s as simple online journals, but lately have evolved into elaborate forums of commentary and debate on politics and culture, engaging millions of participants and readers, in true Web 2.0 fashion. While attending a New York Knicks game in Madison Square Garden in early 2003, Jason McCabe Calacanis, who covered the 1990s dot.com industry as founder of the *Silicon Alley Reporter*, and Brian Alvey, Web designer for *TV Guide* and other publications, decided to come up with a way to capitalize on this extraordinary Web traffic. Their idea: sign up some of the Web's top bloggers, many of whom made little or no money from their citizen journalism, and aggregate their writing into a powerful network that could sell advertising.

Weblogs, Inc., as the duo named their start-up, eventually enrolled about 90 bloggers, with Peter Rojas, whose hugely popular Engadget blog surveys new technology, heading the list. Weblogs, Inc. provided the bloggers with the technology and ad support needed to convert their passion, and readers' attention, into steady income. With costs negligible—after all, e-publishing requires no printing presses, paper, or expensive distribution systems—Weblogs, Inc. rocketed to profitability in just 12 months. In late 2005, the partners sold the firm to AOL for $25 million, joining the Internet giant as executive experts on the Web 2.0 world.

Another New York journalist, Nick Denton, founded a similarly successful federation of blogs, Gawker Media. The company targets upscale Internet users with sites like Gawker, which dishes dirt on New York's celebrity and media culture; Wonkette, which chronicles the intersection of politics and fame in Washington, D.C.; and Defamer, a Hollywood celebrity blog. By early 2006, the company's blogs boasted a whopping 2 million page views a day and about $2 million annually in advertising sales. The success of Weblogs, Inc. and Gawker Media has encouraged a growing number of high-profile bloggers, including lefty pundit Arianna Huffington, whose West Coast–based *Huffington Post* has become a liberal must-read, to set up New York ad operations to cash in on their heavy Web traffic. After all, part of Weblogs' and Gawker's secret is their New York location, close to the nation's leading ad agencies and some of its big advertisers.

A slightly different species of Silicon Alley firm has sprung up to take advantage of the lightning growth of Internet advertising. Among the sharpest is Right Media, launched by Michael Walrath, one more former DoubleClick executive. With advertisers now funneling $15 billion a year into Internet advertising, Right Media's online market, enabling buyers and sellers of Web ads to do business with maximum efficiency, fills an urgent need. With its market already attracting around 11,000 participants, the company—financed by more than $50 million, including a big chunk from Yahoo—has grown to employ nearly 100 people in New York.

A second thriving enabler of online ads is Manhattan-based Massive Inc., whose founder, Mitch Davis, began pondering in 2002 how to capitalize on the skyrocketing popularity of online video games, especially the so-called massive multiplayer games, in which thousands of online participants interact with one another, forming armies to storm cyberspace castles, for example. With millions playing these online games, Massive's sophisticated software, inserting ads into the games' ever-changing environments, is a marketer's godsend. In online video racing, for instance, animated billboards hawk products as virtual cars zoom around the virtual tracks.

Impressed by Massive's software—and by the big-league advertisers like Coca-Cola and Intel who've paid massively to use it—Microsoft plunked down a reported $400 million last year to buy the company, which will stay in New York. "Traditional advertisers are under ever more pressure to put more of their money into online advertising, and anyone that can help them figure out how to do that is a good investment these days," says James Robinson IV, founder of RRE Ventures, a venture capital firm that invested in Massive.

Silicon Alley has prospered by helping other New York companies get up to twenty-first-century speed. GPShopper, for example, founded by Alex Muller, an engineer who worked in Israel's technology industry, takes advantage of the city's abundance of retailers. Using the latest search-engine technology, Muller's service lets consumers scan nearby stores for products—and have that information zipped right to their cell phones. The service represents one way that brick-and-mortar retailers can compete with online buying. "We are essentially a technology-based marketing company that helps drive consumers into stores, and New York is the center of the marketing world," says Muller. "New York is where many of the people we want to partner with are headquartered."

As in the nineties, Wall Street offers tech entrepreneurs a world of opportunity. YellowJacket Software, for example, a California firm, developed an online system allowing traders to analyze transactions in the highly specialized but rapidly growing field of weather derivatives. These financial instruments allow companies to hedge against weather-related losses: a utility firm, say, can buy a contract that will pay them if they lose revenues because of a warm winter. YellowJacket has moved to Manhattan to be closer to the city's financial world as it tries to strike it rich in what is now a $12 billion slice of the derivatives market.

Moving to Manhattan to take advantage not so much of its special market opportunities as of its tech talent pool are two Internet colossi, Google and Yahoo. Google recently moved from five floors in a Broadway tower to 300,000 square feet on Eighth Avenue, where it can accommodate up to 1,000 employees. Its New York outpost opened in 2000 with an ad office but expanded three years ago to house R & D teams. Gotham is now the company's second-largest location, trailing only its Sunnyvale, California, headquarters. "We are impressed with the quality of talent in this area and continue to expand," says Craig Nevill-Manning, Google's New York research director. Yahoo opened an East Coast research center in Manhattan late last year, headed by a former Bell Labs scientist.

All this excitement has investors ready to finance a new generation of tech firms. The New York metro area has become the third-biggest market for venture capital in the nation, outpaced only by Silicon Valley and greater Boston. Even more important, perhaps, a crucial component of the digital economy—venture capitalists willing to finance start-ups—has emerged in the city. They have joined together in New York Angels, a consortium of nearly 70 investors, each agreeing to put up at least $50,000 a year for local high-tech start-ups. "We get maybe 400 businesses a year looking for funding," says chairman David Rose, a scion of New York's Rose real-estate family and an early investor in local technology firms. "There's a lot of pent-up demand."

But these new investors are cautious, tending to back entrepreneurs with proven track records. That wariness has helped give the new Silicon Alley a less freewheeling spirit than during the 1990s, when blue jeans were the norm and firms often splurged their venture capital or IPO money on lavish launch parties and fancy offices before turning a profit. At a recent off-the-record meeting of New York Angels, all but one of the 40 or so investors attending wore ties, and the three entrepreneurs pitching for dollars were likewise buttoned-down. Each company founder emphasized his business experience and how much of his own money had already gone into his venture, and each outlined a realistic road to profitability.

> **"The New York metro area has become the third-biggest market for venture capital in the nation."**

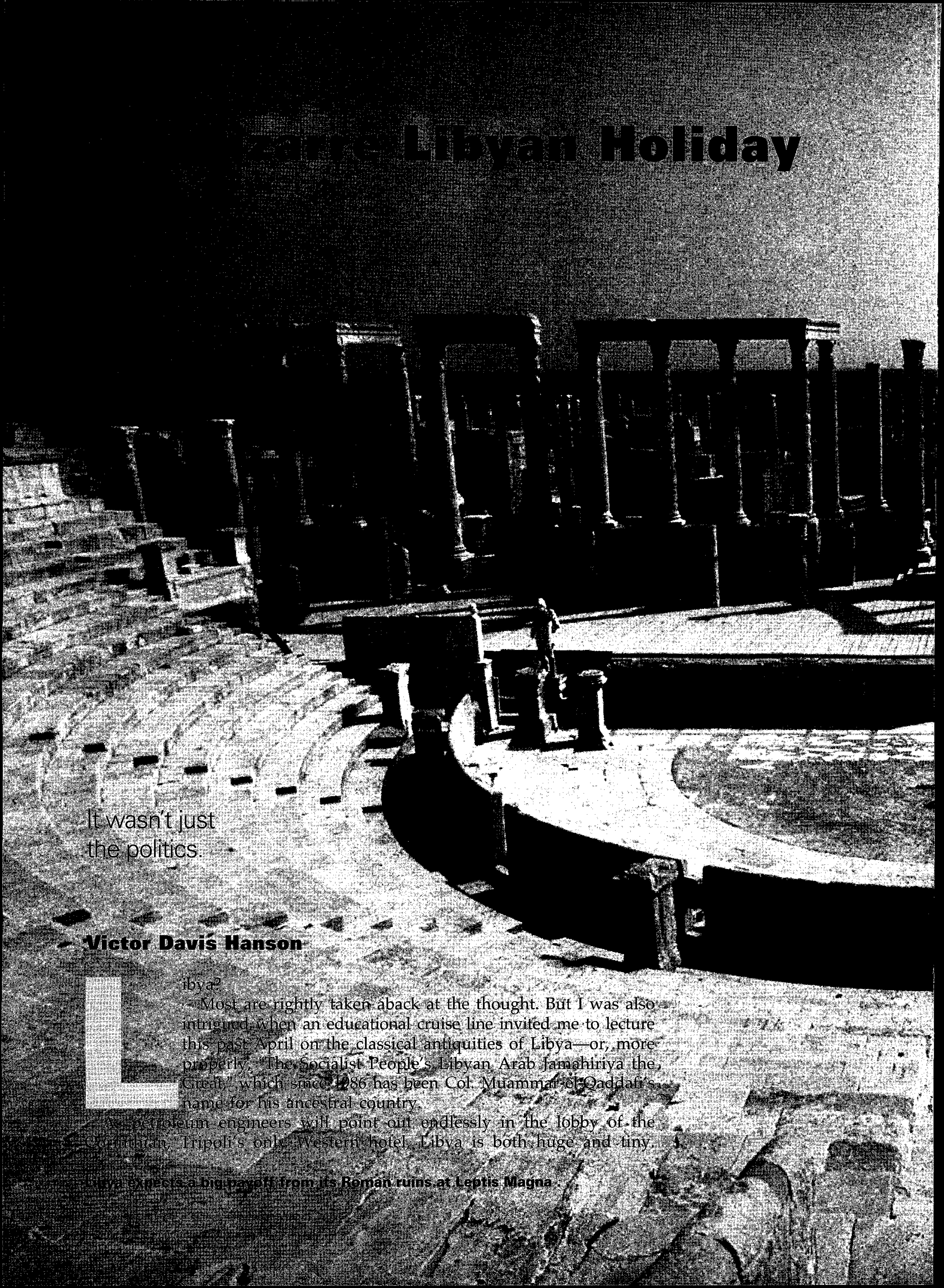
With capital tighter and entrepreneurs paying close attention to spending, Silicon Alley's revival has yet to produce the kind of ripples through New York's broader economy that occurred during the late 1990s, when the tech boom drove gains in everything from commercial real estate to corporate party planning.

The lack of that kind of economic buzz is a reminder that Silicon Alley's revival is fragile—so much so that it could still founder in New York's tough-on-entrepreneurs climate, with its high costs, entangling regulations, and job-killing taxes. Compounding these problems, Gotham has shuttered nineties programs that helped tech firms find cheap space and grow throughout the city, deeming them pointless after the post-9/11 meltdown, when few proved interested in taking advantage of them. Thus, New York's incentive programs now favor manufacturing businesses and local neighborhood development, suggesting to would-be tech entrepreneurs that the city would rather cling to its shrinking old-economy industries than develop new digital ones.

If New York officials want to encourage Silicon Alley's continued revival, they must focus on what would make the city more welcoming to entrepreneurs. Foremost would be rolling back the city's most destructive taxes, especially the nearly $2 billion property-tax hike of 2003. With Manhattan businesses now paying around $15 per square foot in taxes on office leases, compared with just $3 in nearby Jersey City, tenants like Citigroup are again moving jobs out of the city; tech companies, as they begin to prosper and add jobs, might follow. The city should also end surcharges on its steep personal income taxes, which fall disproportionately on budding businesses, since many organize themselves as Subchapter S corporations, taxed at personal income-tax rates. And it should renew incentive plans that allow landlords to offer attractive rents to tech firms that want to locate in the city's underused office districts.

If the first version of Silicon Alley—the first cutting-edge industry to emerge in New York in decades—bloomed unexpectedly amid the doldrums of the early 1990s, Silicon Alley's rebirth after the devastation of 9/11 has been no less unlikely. Despite all the blows Gotham has suffered—including self-inflicted ones—the city still has a golden opportunity to capitalize on all the ambition and money and expertise at work in its digital economy. New York's future prosperity may depend on it.

Research for this article was supported by the Brunie Fund for New York Journalism.



zarre Libyan Holiday

It wasn't just the politics.

Victor Davis Hanson

Libya?

Most are rightly taken aback at the thought. But I was also intrigued when an educational cruise line invited me to lecture this past April on the classical antiquities of Libya—or, more properly, "The Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya the Great," which since 1986 has been Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's name for his ancestral country.

As petroleum engineers will point out endlessly in the lobby of the Corinthian, Tripoli's only Western hotel, Libya is both huge and tiny.

Libya expects a big payoff from its Roman ruins at Leptis Magna . . .

BARRY IVERSON/TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

Slightly larger than Alaska, it is likewise relatively empty of people and almost unexplored. Oilmen like both. We forget that, for all its notoriety, Libya, given the dearth of water and the nearness of the desert to within 50 miles of the coastline, has fewer than 6 million residents—one of the smallest populations of any Arab nation.

The Roman ruins at Leptis Magna and Sabratha are among the most impressive in the Mediterranean. And they are relatively untouched and unseen, since Qaddafi expelled most Europeans soon after his 1969 socialist revolution. An earlier bloody North African officer who staged a coup, Septimus Severus, was born in AD 146 at Leptis. His largesse to his native city—an enormous basilica, triumphal arches, a vast harbor and lighthouse—together with the booming commerce of the imperial eastern Mediterranean during Rome's first attempt at globalization, made these North African coastal settlements among the most vast and opulent of the empire. The dry climate and sparse nomadic population have for centuries ensured the preservation of Libya's "cities in the sand" long after the Vandals looted them. They remain haunting today in their grandeur, more like recent ghost towns than ancient ruins.

It's also impossible not to have a perverse curiosity about the proverbially lunatic present-day Libya. It is not just its 35-year history of sponsoring African revolutionaries, terrorist operatives in Europe, and hit squads sent after Libyan dissidents. There are stranger, North Korea–like tales. Many there still remember the Colonel's 1977 fiat that all Libyans, even Tripoli's 1 million urban residents, were to raise chickens; or his call to gather up all of Jamahiriya's Western musical instruments and burn them *en masse*; or his offer of $5,000 to any Libyan who would marry a sub-Saharan black African to further Qaddafi's own reputation as the great African unifier.

But even more bizarre were the reports that after 2003, Qaddafi had quite abruptly liberalized his police state. By the time of my visit in spring 2006, he was finishing his byzantine negotiations with the American State Department, which would get rid of his weapons of mass destruction, reopen embassies in both capitals, and allow Libyans and Americans to visit each country freely. Qaddafi had even appointed an American-educated economist as his new prime minister, and he was eager for the planned renewed relations with the United States to evolve into real friendship—hence the limited number of visas now accorded to the new generation of American visitors.

I had a few reservations, of course, about visiting Qaddafi's Libya, having criticized Arab autocracies frequently in print, both here and abroad, and having read long ago the Colonel's bizarre *Green Book* and its plans of making Libyans into new "partners" of his authoritarian socialist state, rather than "slaves" to Western-style capitalist democracy. That pamphlet—a mishmash of Nasserite, socialist, Islamic, Bedouin, and authoritarian pop philosophizing—was Libya's *Robert's Rules of Order* for a large cadre of aging revolutionary committees and increasingly worried security services.

Nor is it quite as easy to enter and travel inside Libya as its new generation of reformers envisions. Moreover, there was only an American interest section at the Corinthian hotel, no embassy, so travelers until recently were more or less on their own. And I had my own complications: because of a long-planned speaking tour in the American South, I would have to fly late and alone into Tripoli to meet the cruise ship from Italy—hopefully still docked at Leptis—and then trust that the visa that allowed me to enter only by air would also permit departure by sea to Carthage in Tunisia. Then there was a minor health problem of intermittent abdominal aching and nausea that had persisted for over a year, despite a physician's diagnosis of "bad food" or perhaps yet another kidney stone. Still, I figured I would stop the morning sit-ups and the Libyan holiday would be fine.

After receiving my visa from a Canadian go-between—by spring of this year, our government still had not allowed any Libyan consular officials inside the United States—I landed in Tripoli in mid-April, met my government-supplied travel minders, and began asking rapid-fire questions about Libya, ancient and modern. Muammar Qaddafi's portrait, splashed over a background of his trademark green, still looms everywhere, albeit now surrounded with Coke and Sony billboards. The Colonel is also often superimposed on a verdant map of Africa to remind Libyans that his geriatric revolutionary socialist movement still exudes Pan-African zeal.

When I arrived, Lionel Richie had just finished a rock concert at Qaddafi's former residence, commemorating the 20th anniversary of Ronald Reagan's "crime" of bombing Tripoli. Between songs, Richie offered prayers for Qaddafi's deceased "daughter," killed by the American bombs (most think that Qaddafi adopted her posthumously). Most Libyans I talked with, though, seemed indifferent to the celebration, griping instead about all the money going "south" to Third World con artists in sub-Saharan Africa still masquerading as sixties-style Communists and national liberationists. They were much more interested in the world to the north, asking whether George Bush would reply seriously to Qaddafi's bold peace feelers and follow the Europeans back into Libya.

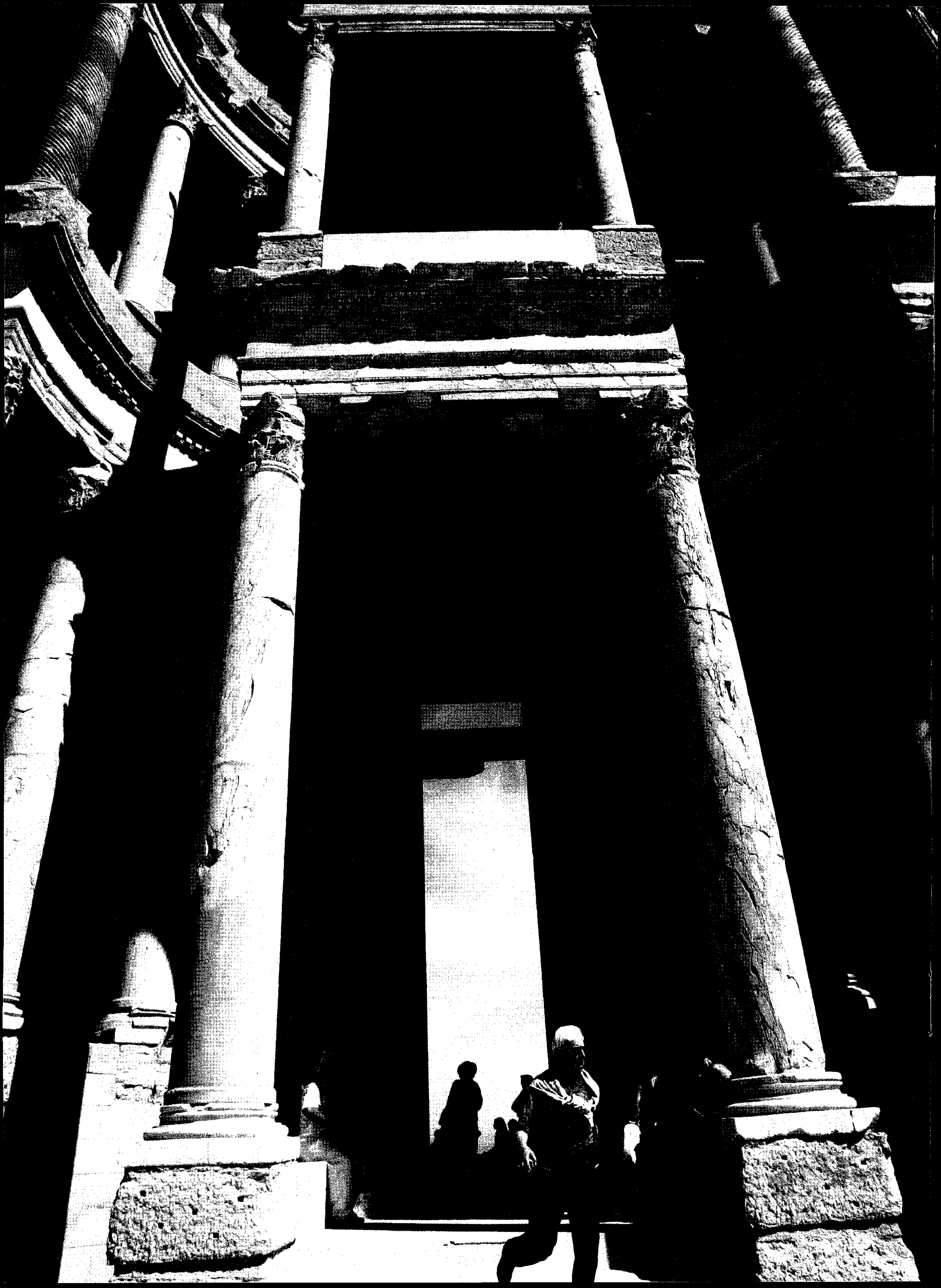
> **"Between songs, Lionel Richie offered prayers for Qaddafi's deceased 'daughter,' killed by American bombs."**

As my minders drove me the next few days back and forth through the drab city, I was struck that a nation that could export 1.6 million barrels of oil a day (bringing in over $40 billion in annual income at recent prices) could not yet asphalt all the dusty back ways of Tripoli's suburbs or fix the gargantuan potholes on the main thoroughfares. But read the *Green Book*, and then the general poverty of the country seems the logical manifestation of Qaddafi's zealous vows to eliminate most private property, end a market economy and its "parasitical" middle class, shrink the professional elite, and ensure cradle-to-grave subsidies for everyone else—all the while supporting "liberation" movements from South Africa to Northern Ireland.

The first few days went well. The intrigue of Leptis Magna is not just that it spreads almost endlessly through dunes and grass-covered hills, with the pristine Mediterranean shore at its back, but that most of its remains, like Colonel Qaddafi's oil, still lie under the sand. Skeletons of old Italian cart rails and rusted tools are scattered around the site, the detritus of Mussolini's once-grand schemes to showcase his Roman forebears' first civilizing mission to tame North Africa. Western archaeologists, nursed on the dated excavation reports of the 1960s, have pined to return for four decades. For the classical scholar, Leptis of the magnificent mosaics is like a mine in the mother lode, shut down when its richest vein was scarcely tapped.

Libyans seem to talk nonstop. It's as if they have been jolted from a long sleep and are belatedly discovering, thanks to their newfound Internet, satellite television, and cell phones—many carry two to ensure that they are never out of service from competing companies—that there is indeed a wide world outside of dreary Tripoli and beyond the monotonous harangues of government socialists on the state-owned TV and radio stations.

They talked about their new gadgetry, and much else, with infectious optimism. As one hopeful Libyan travel entrepreneur with friends in the government explained, there might be some irony after all to Libya's long, self-imposed insularity. Yes, he conceded, foreign investment declined. Oilmen left. Petroleum production nose-dived from more than 3 million barrels to never more than 2 million. But there was a silver lining: Did all that not have the effect of saving Libya's precious resource to await the return of the present sky-high prices? Yes, Libya had banked a sort of strategic oil reserve that now was to be tapped at its most opportune moment. Yes, it was Libya's grand strategy to deny Westerners its petroleum



treasure for years, until they finally came around to pay what it was really worth!

While my travel entrepreneur had offered that analysis in deference to, or in fear of, the Colonel, I was not sure that it did not make a certain sort of post facto sense. And at cafés and the government port offices—it turned out that, due to restrictions on my visa, I was not allowed to leave Libyan soil to board even the docked cruise ship and had to return to hotels in Tripoli each evening—Libyans gushed on that geologists may have just scratched the surface of their country's known oil and gas reserves. The petroleum alone under the desert was already pegged at 40 billion barrels—with 60 percent of the country still uncharted. To add to their euphoria, I did some quick math. At a theoretical $70 a barrel, the likely climb back to more than 3 million barrels a day could mean an extra $35 billion a year in windfall Libyan petro-profits.

> **"The petroleum under the desert was pegged at 40 billion barrels—with 60 percent of the country still uncharted."**

Libyans have surprisingly little anger over these four squandered decades. Instead, they kept voicing the same themes—including that the past opportune "conservation" soon would bring dividends to the magnificent ruins at Sabratha and Leptis as well. "Isn't it true, Dr. Hanson," they often queried, "that our antiquities are the best in the Mediterranean? Because few have seen them, they are mysterious and not so damaged from tourism—and now just waiting for you in the West to work with us to rediscover them. The sand at Leptis is like the sand of the desert: both have been keeping our ruins and oil safe until now."

The tiny world of classics, of course, eagerly awaits the reopening of Leptis Magna. But more important, there are rumors of Italian and Maltese tourist pavilions and more Corinthian-like seaside hotels to come—the Mediterranean coastline outside of Tripoli is as beautiful as it is pristine. Over lunches, the Libyan tourist officials traded guesses on the numbers of European cruise ships that would soon queue up outside Libya's soon-to-be-built tourist docks. They would unload myriads of shoppers laden with euros and eager for Berber folk arts and crafts—culture's counterpart to the proposed enormous liquefied natural gas plants that would supply Europe's energy appetite across the Mediterranean.

But always framing these conversations were two more melancholy themes that led to sudden embarrassing silences—the United States' new Middle East "democratization" policy and Libya's recent history. Would the United States warm to Libya's bold opening without impossible preconditions? Were not Libya's oil, antiquities, and goodwill enough to make everyone forget the unfortunate shared past—the last sentiments always in more hushed tones, given the fear of ubiquitous government informers in and outside our small circle.

When I went over the old litany—the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, Libya's vast weapons-of-mass-destruction program, the efforts to cause havoc in Chad, the trumped-up capital convictions of Bulgarian nurses falsely charged with deliberately injecting Libyan children with HIV, the recent plan to assassinate Saudi crown prince Abdullah after he traded slurs with Qaddafi at an Arab League summit in 2003, and on and on—Libyans looked away as if the rude stranger had ruined a long-planned reunion celebration.

At night, I stayed at either a shabby government-run hotel or the overbooked Corinthian—the oasis in Tripoli, home to American consular officials, oilmen, and deal makers of every

. . . and at Sabratha, established by the Phoenicians.

KHALED DESOUKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

stripe. It is a Star Wars bar of opulent sheikhs and savvy Texans, although its immaculate marble, first-rate service—the nation's only ATM stands in the lobby—and excellent food are more reminiscent of something out of the Gulf or Las Vegas.

A constant topic among foreigners is the mystery over Qaddafi's opening of the country in 2004 and his pledge to give up his WMD arsenal. American liberal pundits ridicule the administration's claim that Saddam Hussein's capture, and especially the end of his sons Uday and Qusay, prompted the Colonel's desire to avoid the same fate for his family—proof, as it were, of the success of the Bush Middle East policy. But perhaps it is true—at least that is what Qaddafi supposedly told Italian prime minister Berlusconi in a phone conversation: "I will do whatever the Americans want, because I saw what happened in Iraq, and I was afraid."

Libyans, of course, prefer to put a diplomatic spin on the conversion without assigning causation: "You Americans," they told me, "should call it a windfall: you went to the wrong palace to find your WMD by force but, by our goodwill, found it here nonetheless—and in peace." I smiled and added that rumors abound in Tripoli of Americans pondering a multimillion-dollar incinerator to dispose of the deadly stockpiles.

But there were other reasons for change as well. At least three of Qaddafi's eight children are European-educated and reportedly have persuaded their father to emulate what they have seen and enjoyed abroad. His father's most trusted child, 33-year-old Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, heads a charity foundation and talks often about reform and the need for more Western expertise. In vague terms, he even hints that political liberalization will follow the strengthening of the economy.

There is also real Libyan disgust over the billions squandered on revolutionary—mostly terrorist—movements the world over, especially the largesse given to the African insurrectionists. As one minor Libyan official put it to me, "They all cut deals with you in the West—the African National Congress, the IRA, Sandinistas, Liberians, and the Palestinians. Now you think these former killers are okay again, but not us—who had less blood on our hands. So why should we not deal, too?" I passed over the probable falsity of that claim and instead reminded him of rumors that al-Qaida-backed terrorists see Qaddafi's quasi-secular socialism as heresy and have been trying in earnest to assassinate him—groups with such typical bumper-sticker nomenclature as the Islamic Movement of Martyrs, Libyan Jihad Movement, and Islamic Movement for Change. Apparently the enemy of our enemies is to be our friend, after all.

As the conversation lengthened, Libyan nationalism was more freely voiced as an additional catalyst for change. Did I know that much of Libya's known oil reserves were in the east, near the poorly demarcated and disputed Egyptian border? Did Americans appreciate that rich Libya is a vast country with few Arabs, while poor Egypt is a narrow ribbon of more than 70 million Arabs?

More concerns followed. There are a million Egyptian guest workers in Libya, many of them there illegally. In Egyptian circles, pan-Arabist talk of the old Nasserite notion of a United Arab Republic still abounds, a "reunification" perhaps of part of Libya's eastern tribal zones with an Egypt without oil—the same sort of nonsense that Libya once proposed to Tunisia. In this context, my Libyan companions voiced a weird sort of nostalgia for the old American Wheelus air force base, vacated in 1970—now an eerie, grass-covered area on the coast east of Tripoli that was partly expropriated by the Soviet and then the Libyan air force, and then bombed in the 1986 U.S. raid.

Driving over potholes in a small, cramped Nissan full of cigarette smoke, I thought, must explain the increasing fevers and occasional vomiting I was continuing to experience. Was it car sickness or something I ate? Even when much of the abdominal pain suddenly went away, the brief respite gave way to even more sweats and fever. Or maybe the malaise was due to the newly allowed Al Jazeera beaming in all the cafés, blaring out the usual monotony of

IED explosions from Iraq and finger-shaking lectures from Gaza and Lebanon. Finally, after another three-hour marathon session with port officials, I was allowed onto the ship and had my first dinner with the guests. Then I finished a formal lecture on the Roman economy and culture of the early empire in the lounge—and quite literally collapsed in a fever in my cabin.

A few hours after the lecture, I woke up, delirious, and called the ship's doctor, a young Ukrainian. After a quick examination, she guessed a perforated appendix, perhaps already of some hours' or even a day's duration. She then explained the bad—and worse—options: the ship was embarking the next morning on a 30-hour cruise to Tunisia. If I did have a ruptured appendix, surgery would be impossible at sea. I could risk the voyage or, as she advised, try a Libyan hospital, although no Westerner to her knowledge—and she knew of Russians who had worked in Tripoli—had recently experienced surgery in the state-run hospitals. Prior to departure, I had done some research on Libya and remembered coming across an old *Wall Street Journal* piece that referred in passing to Libya's hospitals as "dirty death traps." And I remembered the stories of the Bulgarian nurses and their clinic's contaminated needles, as well as an offhand remark by one of my newfound Libyan friends that he had just returned *from Tunis* for "minor" surgery.

"I tried to use the toilet, but it was backed up. When the nurse readied my mask, she said, 'Put your trust in Allah.'"

By midnight, the fever had climbed higher, and there was really little choice. The Libyan minders arrived, worried that I had food poisoning or some other bad experience that might sour our once-happy plans for national conciliation. After a brief consultation, they notified the proper port authorities. I was allowed off the boat, driven in a taxi to the nearest Red Crescent clinic, and rushed in. The on-call intern had good and bad news: the pain and swelling probably indicated a textbook case of a perforated appendix, so the diagnosis was not a problem. But there were a few hitches. I had to be operated on immediately at the clinic—no time for the hospital—and that would require a mandatory government blood test and finding a surgeon at 2 AM.

The clinic was what one sees everywhere in the medical practice of the Third World. In the chaos, there seem no formal demarcations between patients and hordes of relatives, janitors, and doctors at work, or waiting and operating rooms. So I still insisted that the recurring pain was just another kidney stone—I have passed a half-dozen in the last 30 years and had one cut out—or at least a year-old problem relieved, as in the past, by antibiotics. But on arrival, the bleary-eyed surgeon smiled at this pathetic denial and matter-of-factly announced his verdict: immediate surgery—the sooner the better, to ensure that the spread of peritonitis remained "localized."

A Pakistani nurse sterilized a few surgical instruments, and soon a young Syrian anesthesiologist arrived. They took me to a tiny sparse room with a table and a light. The doctor assured me that he would not only do a good job but would also "clean up" the mess, with as many bags of saline and as much suctioning as necessary. He laughed at my final stab at alternative antibiotic treatment, and murmured something like, "You probably want to live tomorrow, so we'd better start right now."

I tried to use the bathroom, but the toilet was backed up, without paper, and the floor watery. I had a few memories in delirium of leaving a final phone message for my family back in California that things were not going well in Tripoli. When the nurse readied my mask, she said in English, "Put your trust in Allah." For some reason—I am not a church attendee—I

A Roman mosaic from Libya shows lions killing Christians in an amphitheater.

whispered back, "I prefer the redemptive power of Jesus Christ." The last images I remember were of an illuminated minaret out the window and Qaddafi in sunglasses glaring down from the wall—and a strange sense of well-being that complete strangers, with little resources at their disposal, were eager to save my life at 4 AM in an Islamic clinic.

Libya poses a special damned-if-you-do/damned-if-you-don't challenge for the Bush administration, especially in autumn 2006, after the Hamas election victory on the West Bank and the ongoing mayhem in Iraq, Afghanistan, and southern Lebanon, when neoconservative idealism is fading before the return of more hard-nosed realism in foreign policy. I heard the arguments of both sides in a later meeting with State Department and National Security Agency officials following my return.

Skeptics can't really believe that Reagan's "mad dog," who once called on Arabs to "destroy" the United States and its Arab surrogates, could ever be sincere, much less relied upon. But more important, how can the United States cut a deal that serves to legitimize a dictator and his gulag, when Americans are dying in the Hindu Kush and the Sunni Triangle to foster and protect democracies?

And what about cutting the ground out from under Libyan exiles, idealists, and reformers—such as the outspoken Mohamed and Fathi El-Jahmi—long the targets of Qaddafi's operatives? Isn't this the Libya that tried at one time or another to overthrow or undermine the governments of Egypt, Chad, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia? And aren't journalists still locked up—or killed, as in the case of Daif al-Ghazai? And aren't the infamous *zina* laws, which lock up indefinitely women accused of supposed moral laxity, still in effect, proving that in the Middle East a secular police state can be just as repressive as an Islamist patriarchy? I gathered also that the present goodwill of the Libyan people toward the United States rested in part on our constant opposition to Qaddafi—confirmation of sorts of Bernard Lewis's dictum that when a Middle Eastern autocracy hates us, we are popular, and when not, we are hated.

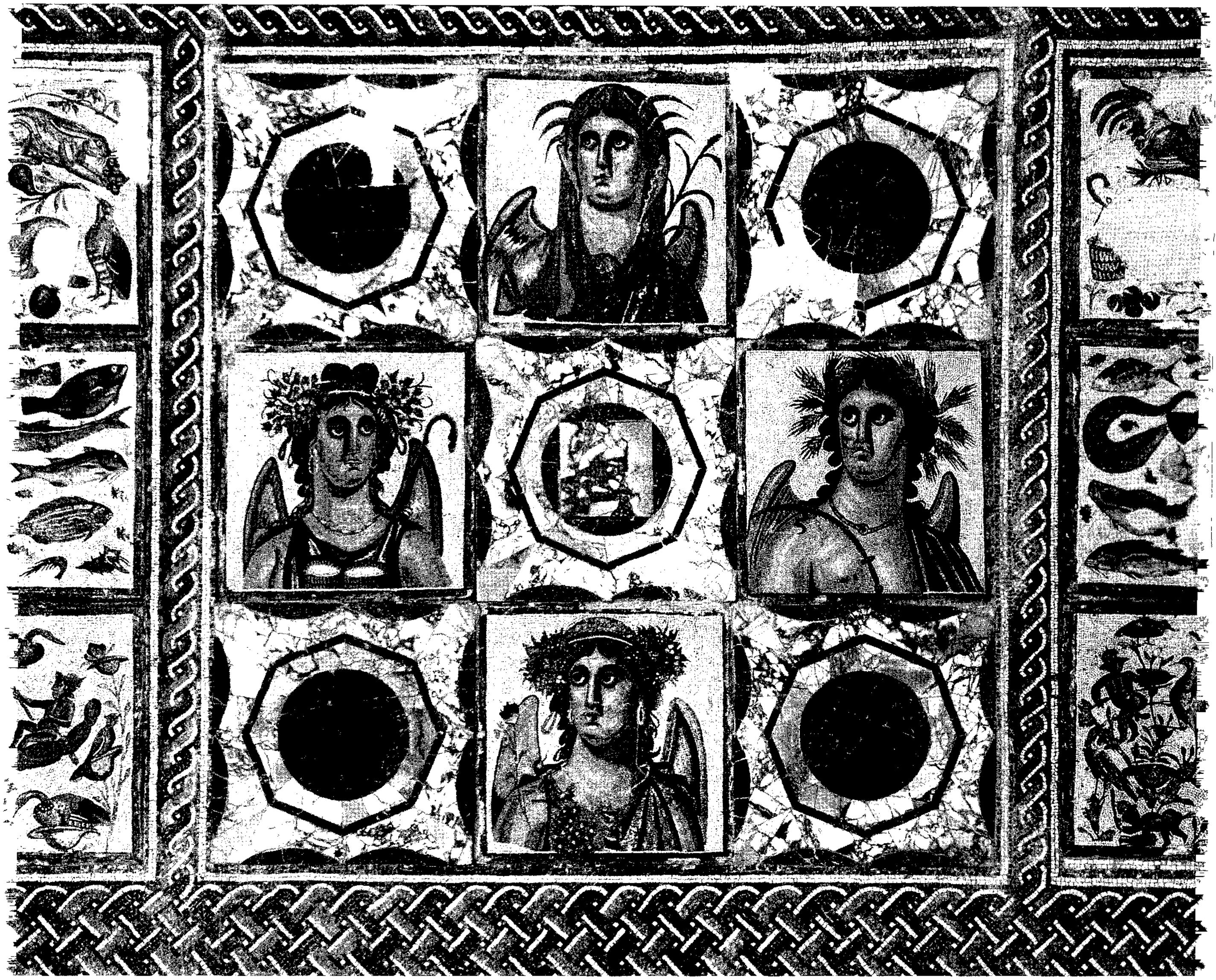
> **“The last images I recall were an illuminated minaret out the window and Qaddafi in sunglasses glaring from the wall.”**

In response, the counterargument went that Libya has oil and natural gas, not just for America but to be put on the global market to help bring supply and demand back into a reasonable equilibrium. So far, our principled distance from Libya has only facilitated Chinese, Russian, and now European entrance into the country, all of whom demand little of Libya in terms of democratization but take away a lot in business and oil. And who knows exactly the true nature of Libyan dissidents? Aren't some of them radical Islamists, who want electoral victory merely to legitimize their anti-Western hatred? That possibility later hit home for me in an informal Washington, D.C., meeting, when one Libyan democratic “reformer” insisted in our conversation on using “Zionist entity” for Israel as he unleashed a repugnant torrent of anti-Semitic nonsense.

The arguments for normalization go on: Qaddafi is somewhere in his late sixties, no longer 20-something, with succession now up in the air. Ridding the world of his weapons-of-mass-destruction stockpiles is alone worth the risk of reconciliation. If his Westernized offspring can liberalize the economy now, perhaps they might in the future assume a Juan Carlos role, satisfied to be ceremonial godheads in a parliamentary republic. None has blood on his hands. Besides, the United States does not have a superfluity of friends in the Middle East, and the more wildcards in our hand the better, especially when the Libyans and we are shared targets of Islamic terrorists. To paraphrase the arguments of Jeanne Kirkpatrick, sometimes isn't it enough that a stable Middle East autocracy eradicates terrorism, since, unlike theocracies or Communist states, such secular dictatorships are much more likely in the distant future to evolve into constitutional governments? So the conundrum continues.

In the early dawn I awoke, groggy from the anesthetic but euphoric, since I was somewhat surprised to be alive. I was immediately told that the Colonel “discourages” analgesics of any sort and that this abstinence was “good,” since I would heal quicker and avoid postoperative constipation. No matter—survival was good enough, especially if the antibiotics would kill off the peritonitis. Back in the United States, a Libyan later laughed that I was lucky that I had tested HIV-negative on the mandatory preoperative test, and left it at that. I gathered that quarantine, not lifesaving surgery, awaits those

THE GRANGER COLLECTION



A less bloodthirsty Roman mosaic in Tripoli celebrates the four seasons.

with a positive result. The final bill for surgery, drugs, and a few days at the clinic was $800, not surprising in a socialist paradise where surgeons make about the same state-mandated wages as those who mop the floors.

These days of recuperation were the most interesting of my Libyan holiday, despite the pain from the surgery and the receding infection. The first guests were career diplomats from the American interest section. They were savvy, both married to Arab nationals, and the epitome of the American foreign service's best professionalism, insisting that food be served, that IV needles be fresh—and urging me to make plans to leave as soon as possible. Soon we talked of politics, and with characteristic sobriety they cautioned neither pessimism nor euphoria, but "exploration." I liked them but did not envy their task in the next month of laying the foundations for an embassy *ex nihilo.*

Dr. Hafez al-Hafez, a Libyan-American exile and medical consultant for the American interest section, also visited regularly. He had only recently been reinvited into Libya as a neurosurgeon. Dr. Hafez immediately made sure that the peritonitis was in remission and that the right antibiotics were being dripped in, and then he held up my gangrenous appendix in a jar of alcohol. He smiled that I had had a close call but admonished that the healed-over abscesses and pustules hanging from what was left from the carcass proved that it was a chronic problem of some duration. Then, like all Libyans, he talked politics.

"No one knows quite why Qaddafi changed, much less whether it bodes well for the U.S. in the long term."

If there is a future for Libya, it will require moderate and educated elites, such as Dr. Hafez, whom the government is cautiously inviting back in and whom it needs desperately to jump-start the economy and reestablish the beginnings of a stable, humane culture. The doctor, in carefully chosen words, echoed the now-familiar themes: that the past is past; that Libya is Libyan, not pan-Arabist; reasonable rather than Islamic fundamentalist; and ready for sincere reengagement. He feels that he poses no danger to the Qaddafi regime, since their short-term aims are now one and the same in reestablishing contact with the West, and since he is a Libyan nationalist and an American go-between, not a zealot of any sort.

SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY

I also corresponded with a few Libyan government officials and, once back home, a few other exiles, and their similar optimism rests on the somewhat shaky proposition that if Libya's vast petroleum and tourist potential is tapped, the resulting bounty will take on a life of its own, convincing even the revolutionary generation of 1969 that the Gulf model is preferable to the nightmare of Iran or Syria. Always in the background looms the untenable option of al-Qaida or the Muslim Brotherhood, which all want to avoid.

Libya was a key part of the world's first globalization, when Rome spread its culture to the shores of North Africa. By its own volition, it appears ready to reenter at least the global commercial system and renounce its past roguery. No one knows quite why Qaddafi changed or whether the about-face is sincere, much less whether it bodes well for the United States in the long term—or even if we can embrace it in the short term without cynical hypocrisy on our part.

I'm sure a desire for a Western standard of living, fear of ending up like the Taliban or the Husseins, jealousy of the rich oil-exporting Gulf sheikhdoms, worry over Islamists and former enemies in the Maghrib, weariness with foreign, money-hungry 1960s revolutionaries, the isolation of a crippling trade boycott, and the opportunity for more Machiavellian triangulation on a new world stage all played a role. But for now, the benefits for both sides outweigh the risks. So we should press ahead—with eyes wide open, in constant consultation with Libyan reformers, and always with the non-negotiable demand that the lives of Libyan dissidents, at home and abroad, are to be sacrosanct.

I lost my bottled, deflated, and black appendix on return, when my physician thought its odd appearance suggested—if it really was an appendix and not part of the intestine, he wondered out loud—that it might well be cancerous. It was not, but the pathologist ground it up all the same. As I write this, four months after the surgery, I have just left the emergency room from another bout with abdominal adhesions, but remain very thankful to my friends in Tripoli, who saved my life and shed a great deal of light on a once-shadowy place, on a very memorable Libyan holiday.

The Press at War

The patriot reporter is passé.

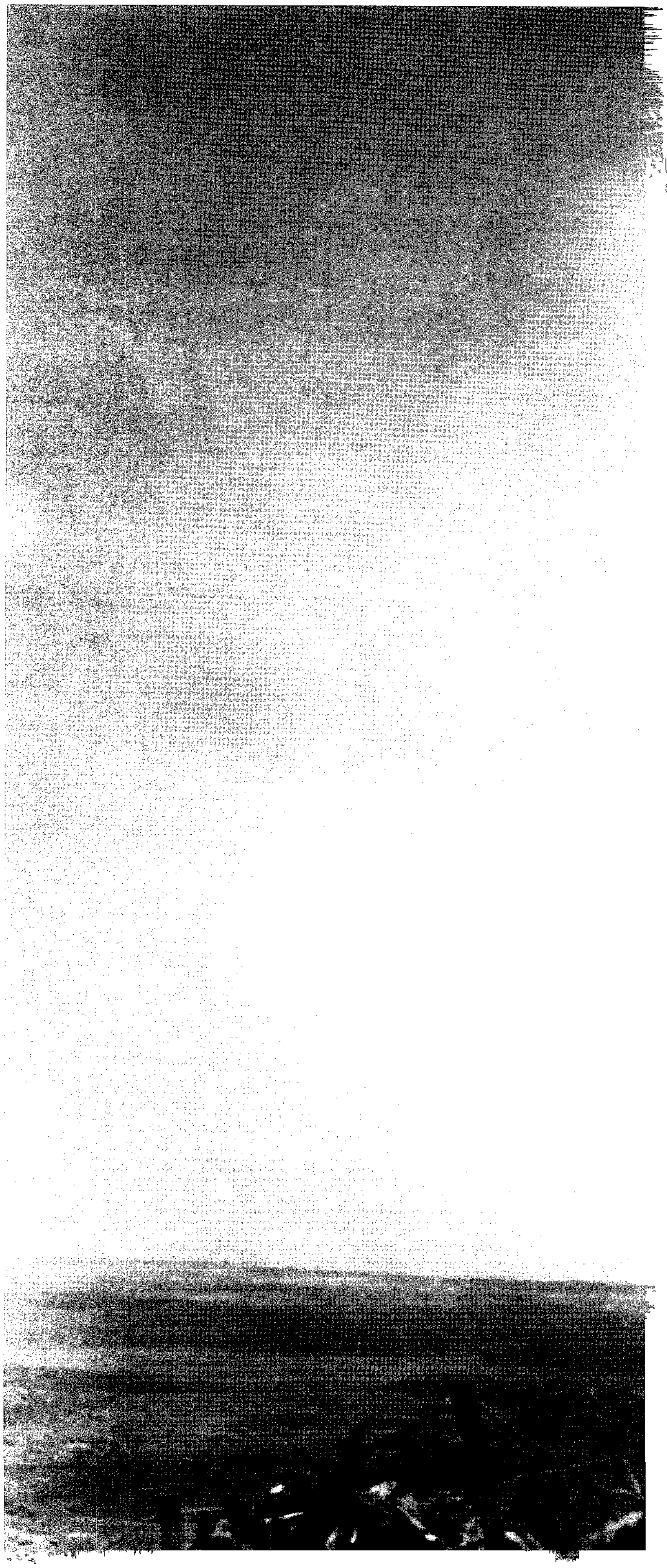
James Q. Wilson

We are told by careful pollsters that half of the American people believe that American troops should be brought home from Iraq immediately. This news discourages supporters of our efforts there. Not me, though: I am relieved. Given press coverage of our efforts in Iraq, I am surprised that 90 percent of the public do not want us out right now.

Between January 1 and September 30, 2005, nearly 1,400 stories appeared on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news. More than half focused on the costs and problems of the war, four times as many as those that discussed the successes. About 40 percent of the stories reported terrorist attacks; scarcely any reported the triumphs of American soldiers and marines. The few positive stories about progress in Iraq were just a small fraction of all the broadcasts.

When the Center for Media and Public Affairs made a nonpartisan evaluation of network news broadcasts, it found that during the active war against Saddam Hussein, 51 percent of the reports about the conflict were negative. Six months after the land battle ended, 77 percent were negative; in the 2004 general election, 89 percent were negative; by the spring of 2006, 94 percent were negative. This decline in media support was much faster than during Korea or Vietnam.

Naturally, some of the hostile commentary reflects the nature of reporting. When every news



World War II's iconic news photo shows heroic marines at Iwo Jima.

JOE ROSENTHAL/CORBIS

outlet struggles to grab and hold an audience, no one should be surprised that this competition leads journalists to emphasize bloody events. To some degree, the press covers Iraq in much the same way that it covers America: it highlights conflict, shootings, bombings, hurricanes, tornadoes, and corruption.

But the war coverage does not reflect merely an interest in conflict. People who oppose the entire War on Terror run much of the national press, and they go to great lengths to make waging it difficult. Thus the *New York Times* ran a front-page story about President Bush's allowing, without court warrants, electronic monitoring of phone calls between overseas terrorists and people inside the U.S. On the heels of this, the *Times* reported that the FBI had been conducting a top-secret program to monitor radiation levels around U.S. Muslim sites, including mosques. And then both the *New York* and *Los Angeles Times* ran stories about America's effort to monitor foreign banking transactions in order to frustrate terrorist plans. The revelation of this secret effort followed five years after the *New York Times* urged, in an editorial, that precisely such a program be started.

Virtually every government official consulted on these matters urged that the press not run the stories because they endangered secret and important tasks. They ran them anyway.

The media suggested that the National Security Agency surveillance might be illegal, but since we do not know exactly what kind of surveillance is undertaken, we cannot be clear about its legal basis. No one should assume that the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act requires the president to obtain warrants from the special FISA court before he can monitor foreign intelligence contacts. Though the Supreme Court has never decided this issue, the lower federal courts, almost without exception, have held that "the Executive Branch need not always obtain a warrant for foreign intelligence surveillance."

Nor is it obvious that FISA defines all of the president's authority. Two assistant attorneys general have argued that when the president believes that a statute unconstitutionally limits his powers, he has the right not to obey it unless the Supreme Court directs him otherwise. This action would be proper even if the president had signed into law the bill limiting his authority. I know: you are thinking, "That is just what the current Justice Department would say." In fact, these opinions were written in the Clinton administration by assistant attorneys general Walter Dellinger and Randolph Moss.

The president may have such power either because it inheres in his position as commander in chief or because Congress passed a law authorizing him to use "all necessary and appropriate force" against nations or people that directed or aided the attack of 9/11. Surveillance without warrants may be just such an "appropriate force." In any event, presidents before Bush have issued executive orders authorizing searches without warrants, and Jaimie Gorelick, once Clinton's deputy attorney general and later a member of the 9/11 Commission, said that physical searches may be done without a court order in foreign intelligence cases. Such searches may well have prevented new terrorist attacks; if they are blocked in the future, no doubt we will see a demand for a new commission charged with criticizing the president for failing to prevent an attack.

In August 2006, when the British arrested the conspirators in the plot to blow up commercial aircraft in flight, evidence suggested that two leads to them were money transactions that began in Pakistan and American intercepts of their electronic chatter. Unfortunately, the *New York Times* and the ACLU were not able to prevent the British from learning these things. But they would have tried to prevent them if they had been based in London.

Suppose the current media posture about American military and security activities had been in effect during World War II. It is easy to imagine that happening. In the 1930s, after all, the well-connected America First Committee had been arguing for years about the need for America to stay out of "Europe's wars." Aware of these popular views, the House of Representatives extended the draft by only a one-vote margin in 1941. Women dressed in black crowded the entrance to the Senate, arguing against extending the draft. Several hundred students at Harvard and Yale, including future Yale leader Kingman Brewster and future American president Gerald Ford, signed statements saying that they would never go to war. Everything was in place for a media attack on the Second World War. Here is how it *might* have sounded if today's customs were in effect:

December 1941: Though the press supports America's going to war against Japan after Pearl Harbor, several editorials want to know why we didn't prevent the attack by selling Japan more oil. Others criticize us for going to war with two nations that had never attacked us, Germany and Italy.

October 1942: The *New York Times* runs an exclusive story about the British effort to decipher German messages at a hidden site at Bletchley Park in England. One op-ed writer criticizes this move, quoting Henry Stimson's statement that gentlemen do not read one another's mail. Because the Bletchley Park code-cracking helped us find German submarines before they attacked, successful U-boat attacks increased once the Germans, knowing of the program, changed their code.

January 1943: After President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill call for the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers, several newspapers criticize them for having closed the door to a negotiated settlement. The press quotes several senators complaining that the unconditional surrender policy would harm the peace process.

May 1943: A big-city newspaper reveals the existence of the Manhattan Project and its effort to build atomic weapons. In these stories, several distinguished scientists lament the creation of such a terrible weapon. After General Leslie Groves testifies before a congressional committee, the press lambastes him for wasting money, ignoring scientific opinion, and imperiling the environment by building plants at Hanford and Oak Ridge.

December 1944: The German counterattack against the Allies in the Ardennes yields heavy American losses in the Battle of the Bulge. The press gives splashy coverage to the Democratic National Committee chairman's assertion that the war cannot be won. A member of the House, a former marine, urges that our troops be sent to Okinawa.

August 1945: After President Truman authorizes dropping the atomic bomb on Japan, many newspapers urge his impeachment.

Thankfully, though, the press did not cover World War II the way it has covered Vietnam and Iraq. What caused this profound change? Like many liberals and conservatives, I believe that our Vietnam experience created new media attitudes that have continued down to the present. During that war, some reporters began their coverage supportive of the struggle, but that view did not last long. Many people will recall the CBS television program, narrated by Morley Safer, about U.S. Marines using cigarette lighters to torch huts in Cam Ne in 1965. Many will remember the picture of a South Vietnamese officer shooting a captured Vietcong through the head. Hardly anyone can forget the My Lai story that ran for about a year after a journalist reported that American troops had killed many residents of that village.

Undoubtedly, similar events occurred in World War II, but the press didn't cover them. In Vietnam, however, key reporters thought that the Cam Ne story was splendid. David Halberstam said that it "legitimized pessimistic reporting" and would show that "there was something terribly wrong going on out there." The film, he wrote, shattered American "innocence" and raised questions about "who *we* were."

The changes came to a head in January 1968, when Communist forces during the Tet holiday launched a major attack on South Vietnamese cities. According to virtually every competent observer, these forces met a sharp defeat, but American press accounts described Tet instead as a major Communist victory. *Washington Post* reporter Peter Braestrup later published a book in which he explained the failure of the press to report the Tet offensive accurately. His summary:

"Rarely has contemporary crisis-journalism turned out, in retrospect, to have veered so widely from reality."

Even as the facts became clearer, the press did not correct its false report that the North Vietnamese had won. When NBC News producer Robert Northshield was asked at the end of 1968 whether the network should put on a news show indicating that American and South Vietnamese troops had won, he rejected the idea, because Tet was already "established in the public's mind as a defeat, and therefore it was an American defeat."

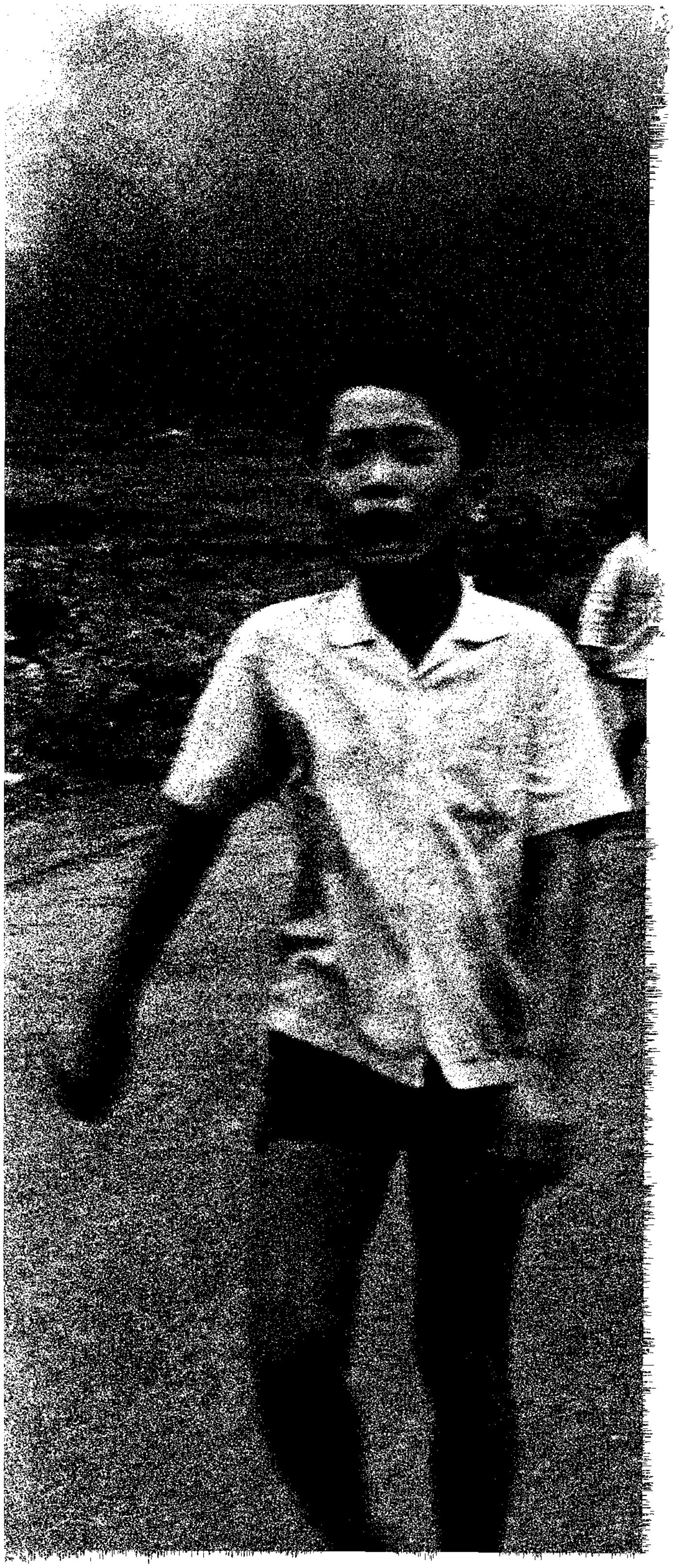
In the opinion of *Washington Post* reporter Braestrup, the news failure resulted not from ideology but from economic and managerial constraints on the press—and in his view it had no material effect on American public opinion.

Others do not share his view. When Douglas Kinnard questioned more than 100 American generals who served in Vietnam, 92 percent said that newspaper coverage was often irresponsible or disruptive, and 96 percent said that television coverage on balance lacked context and was sensational or counterproductive.

An analysis of CBS's Vietnam coverage in 1972 and 1973 supports their views. The Institute for American Strategy found that, of about 800 references to American policy and behavior, 81 percent were critical. Of 164 references to North Vietnamese policy and behavior, 57 percent were supportive. Another study, by a scholar skeptical about the extent of media influence, showed that televised editorial comments before Tet were favorable to our presence by a ratio of four to one; after Tet, they were two to one against the American government's policy.

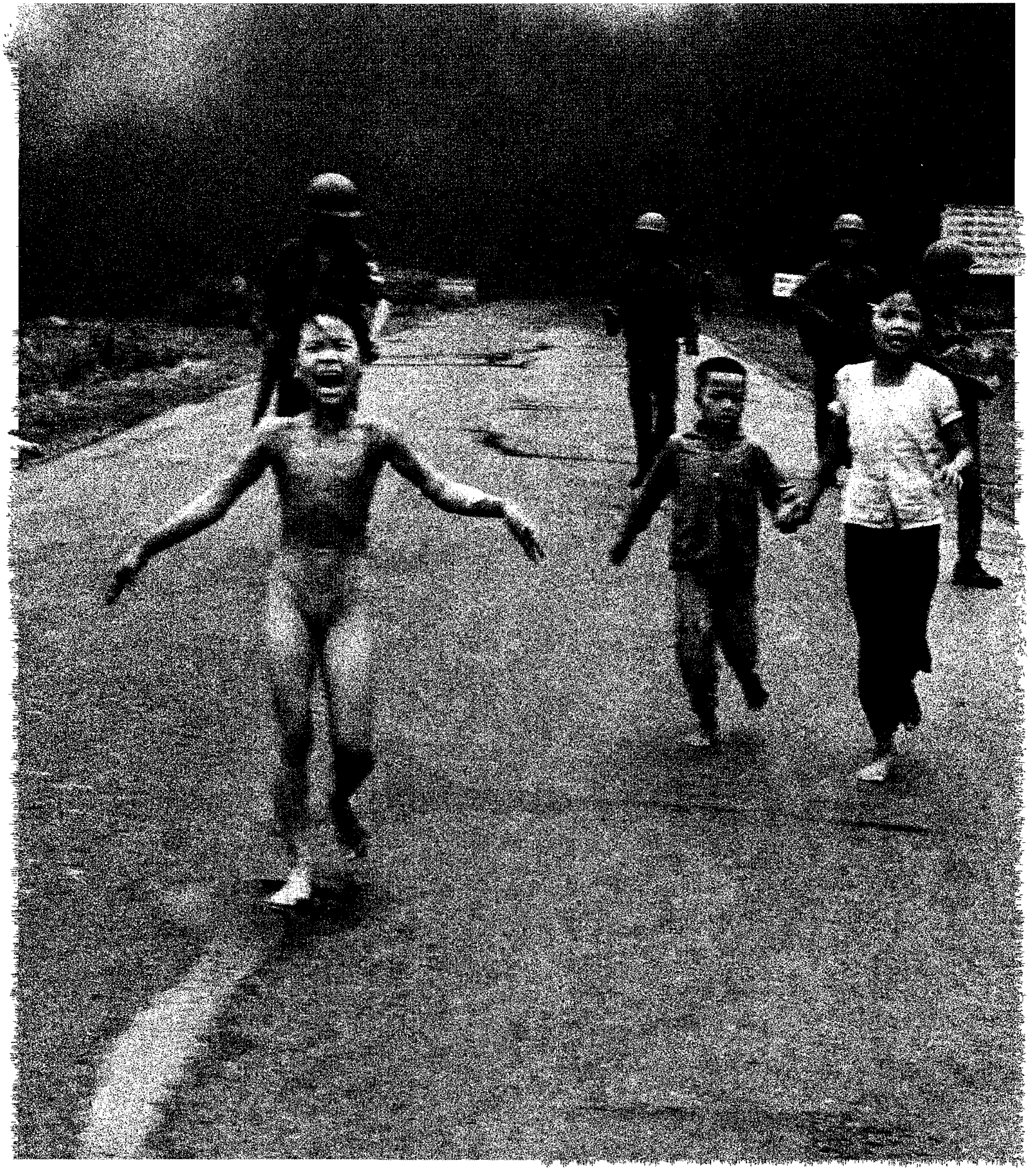
Opinion polls taken in 1968 suggest that before the press reports on the Tet offensive, 28 percent of the public identified themselves as doves; by March, after the offensive was over, 42 percent said they were doves.

Sociologist James D. Wright directly measured the impact of press coverage by comparing the



NICK UT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Vietnam War's most famous photo shows napalmed children fleeing their burning village.



support for the war among white people of various social classes who read newspapers and news magazines with the support found among those who did not look at these periodicals very much. By 1968, when most news magazines and newspapers had changed from supporting the war to opposing it, backing for the war collapsed among upper-middle-class readers of news stories, from about two-thirds who supported it in 1964 to about one-third who supported it in 1968. Strikingly, opinion did not shift much among working-class voters, no matter whether they read these press accounts or not. Affluent people who read the press apparently have more changeable opinions than ordinary folks. Public opinion may not have changed much, but elite opinion changed greatly.

There are countless explanations for why the media produced so many stories skeptical of or hostile to the American military involvement in Vietnam. But many of these explanations are largely myths.

First myth: Media technology had changed. Vietnam was the first war in which television was available to a mass audience, and, as both critics and admirers of TV unite in saying, television brings the war home in often unsettling graphic images. But the Second World War also brought the struggle home through Pathé and Movietone newsreels shown in thousands of theaters nationwide at a time when Americans went to the movies remarkably often. Moreover, television accounts between 1962 and 1968 were not critical of the American effort in Vietnam, and public support for the war then actually increased.

Second myth: The war in Vietnam was conducted without censorship. As a result, the press, with trivial exceptions, could report anything it wanted. Moreover, the absence of a formal declaration of war made it possible for several Americans, including important journalists, to travel to Hanoi, where they made statements about conditions there that often parroted the North Vietnamese party line. But the censorship rules in the Second World War and in Korea, jointly devised by the press and the government, aimed at precluding premature disclosure of military secrets, such as the location of specific combat units and plans for military attacks. The media problem in Vietnam was not the disclosure of secrets but the conveying of an attitude.

Third myth: The press did not report military matters with adequate intelligence and context because few, if any, journalists had any military training. But that has always been the case. One veteran reporter, S. L. A. Marshall, put the real difference this way: once upon a time, "the American correspondent . . . was an American first, a correspondent second." But in Vietnam, that attitude shifted. An older journalist in Vietnam, who had covered the Second World War, lamented the bitter divisions among the reporters in Saigon, where there were "two camps": "those who wanted to win the war and those who wanted to lose it." The new reporters filed exciting, irreverent copy, which made it to the front pages; the veteran reporters' copy ended up buried way in back.

In place of these three myths, we should consider three much more plausible explanations: the first is the weak and ambivalent political leadership that American presidents brought to Vietnam; the second is the existence in the country of a vocal radical movement; and the third is the change that has occurred in the control of media organizations.

First, Presidents Kennedy and Johnson both wanted to avoid losing Vietnam without waging a major war in Asia. Kennedy tried to deny that Americans were fighting. A cable that his administration sent in 1962 instructed diplomats and soldiers never to imply to reporters any "all-out U.S. involvement." Other messages stressed that "this is not a U.S. war." When David Halberstam of the *New York Times* wrote stories criticizing the South Vietnamese government, Kennedy tried to have him fired because he was calling attention to a war that we did not want to admit we were fighting.

Johnson was willing to say that we were fighting, but without any cost and with rosy prospects for an early victory. He sought to avoid losing by contradictory efforts to appease doves (by bombing halts and peace feelers), satisfy hawks (with more troops and more bombing), and control the tactical details of the war from the Oval Office. After the Cam Ne report from Morley Safer, Johnson called the head of CBS and berated him in language I will not repeat here.

When Richard Nixon became president, he wanted to end the war by pulling out American troops, and he did so. None of the three presidents wanted to win, but all wanted to report "progress." All three administrations instructed military commanders always to report gains and rely on suspect body counts as a way of measuring progress. The press quickly understood that they could not trust politicians and high-level military officers.

Second, unlike either World War II or the Korean conflict, there was a radical peace movement in America, much of it growing out of the New Left. There has been domestic opposition to most of our wars (Karlyn Bowman and I have estimated the size of the "peace party" to be about one-fifth of the electorate), but to this latent public resistance was added a broad critique of American society that opposed the war as not only wrong as policy but immoral and genocidal—and, to college students, a threat to their exemption from the draft. Famous opponents of the war traveled to Hanoi to report on North Vietnam. Attorney General Ramsey Clark said that there was neither crime nor internal conflict there. Father Daniel Berrigan described the North Vietnamese people as having a "naïve faith in human goodness." Author Mary McCarthy said these folks had "grace" because they lacked any sense of "alienation."

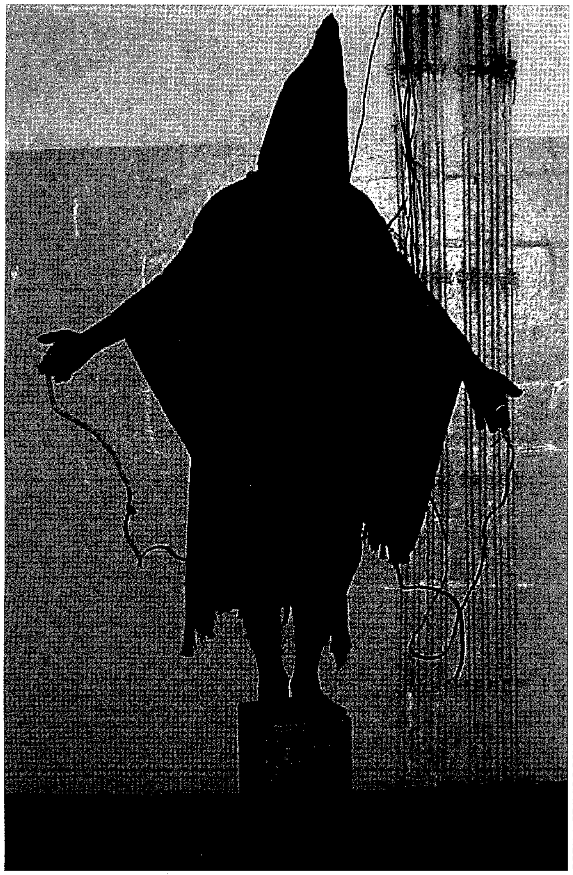
I repeated for the Iraq War the analysis that Professor Wright had done of the impact of the media on public opinion during the Vietnam War. Using 2004 poll data, I found a similar effect: Americans who rarely watched television news about the 2004 political campaign were much more supportive of the war in Iraq than were those who watched a great deal of TV news. And the falloff in support was greatest for those with a college education.

Third, control of the press had shifted away from owners and publishers to editors and reporters. During the Spanish-American War, the sensationalist press, led by Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*, and Joseph Medill's *Chicago Tribune* all actively supported the war. Hearst felt, perhaps accurately, that he had helped cause it. His New York paper printed this headline: HOW DO YOU LIKE THE JOURNAL'S WAR? Even the *New York Times* supported the Spanish-American War, editorializing that the Anti-Imperialist League was treasonable and later that the Filipinos "have chosen a bloody way to demonstrate their incapacity for self-government."

Today, strong owners are almost all gone. When Henry Luce died, *Time* magazine's support for an assertive American foreign policy died with him. William Paley had worked hard to make CBS a supporter of the Vietnam War, but he could not prevent Walter Cronkite from making his famous statement, on the evening news show of February 19, 1968, that the war had become a "stalemate" that had to be ended, and so we must "negotiate." On hearing these remarks, President Johnson decided that the country would no longer support the war and that he should not run for reelection. Over three decades later, Cronkite made the same mistake: we must, he said, get out of Iraq now.

There are still some family owners, such as the Sulzbergers, who exercise control over their newspapers, but they have moved politically left. Ken Auletta has described Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., as a man who has "leaned to the left," but "leaned" understates the matter. Sulzberger was a passionate opponent of the war in Vietnam and was arrested more than once at protest rallies. When he became publisher in 1997, he chose the liberal Howell Raines to control the editorial page and make it, Sulzberger said, a "more assertive, populist page."

Other media companies, once run by their founders and principal owners, are now run by professional managers who report to directors interested in profits, not policy. Policy is the province of the editors and reporters, who are governed by their personal views, many of them


ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Iraq War icon: a prisoner at Abu Ghraib

acquired not by having once covered the police beat but from a college education. By 1978, 93 percent of the top reporters and editors had college degrees.

These three factors worked in concert and have carried down to the present. The ambivalent political leadership of three presidents during Vietnam made the press distrust American leaders, even when, as during the Iraq War, political leadership has been strong. The New Left movement in the 1960s and 1970s slowly abandoned many of its slogans but left its legacy in much of the press and Democratic Party elites. The emergence of journalism as a craft independent of corporate owners reinforced these trends. As one journalist wrote, reporters "had come to reject the idea that they were in any sense part of the American 'team.'" This development happened slowly in Vietnam. Journalists reported most events favorably for the American side from August 1965 to January 1968, but that attitude began shifting with press coverage of Senator J. William Fulbright's hostile Senate hearings and climaxed with the Tet offensive in January 1968. Thereafter, reporters and editors increasingly shared a distrust of government officials, an inclination to look for cover-ups, and a willingness to believe that the government acted out of bad motives.

A watershed of the new attitude is the *New York Times*'s coverage of the Pentagon papers in 1971. These documents, prepared by high officials under the direction of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, were leaked to the *Times* by a former State Department staffer, Daniel Ellsberg. The *Times* wrote major stories, supposedly based on the leaked documents, summarizing the history of our Vietnam involvement.

Journalist Edward Jay Epstein has shown that in crucial respects, the *Times* coverage was at odds with what the documents actually said. The lead of the *Times* story was that in 1964 the Johnson administration reached a consensus to bomb North Vietnam at a time when the president was publicly saying that he would not bomb the north. In fact, the Pentagon papers actually said that, in 1964, the White House had *rejected* the idea of bombing the north. The *Times* went on to assert that American forces had deliberately provoked the alleged attacks on its ships in the Gulf of Tonkin to justify a congressional resolution supporting our war efforts. In fact, the Pentagon papers said the opposite: there was no evidence that we had provoked whatever attacks may have occurred.

In short, a key newspaper said that politicians had manipulated us into a war by means of deception. This claim, wrong as it was, was part of a chain of reporting and editorializing that helped convince upper-middle-class Americans that the government could not be trusted.

Reporters and editors today are overwhelmingly liberal politically, as studies of the attitudes of key members of the press have repeatedly shown. Should you doubt these findings, recall the statement of Daniel Okrent, then the public editor at the *New York Times*. Under the headline, IS THE *NEW YORK TIMES* A LIBERAL NEWSPAPER? Okrent's first sentence was, "Of course it is."

What has been at issue is whether media politics affects media writing. Certainly, that began to happen noticeably in the Vietnam years. And thereafter, the press could still support an American war waged by a Democratic president. In 1992, for example, newspapers denounced President George H. W. Bush for having ignored the creation of concentration camps in Bosnia, and they supported President Clinton when he ordered bombing raids there and in Kosovo. When one strike killed some innocent refugees, the *New York Times* said that it would be a "tragedy" to "slacken the bombardment." These air attacks violated what passes for international law (under the UN Charter, people can only go to war for immediate self-defense or under UN authorization). But these supposedly "illegal" air raids did not prevent *Times* support. Today, by contrast, the *Times* criticizes our Guantánamo Bay prison camp for being in violation of "international law."

But in the Vietnam era, an important restraint on sectarian partisanship still operated: the mass media catered to a mass audience and hence had an economic interest in appealing to as broad a public as possible. Today, however, we are in the midst of a fierce competition among media outlets, with newspapers trying, not very successfully, to survive against 24/7 TV and radio news coverage and the Internet. As a consequence of this struggle, radio, magazines, and newspapers are engaged in niche marketing, seeking to mobilize not a broad market but a specialized one, either liberal or conservative.

Economics reinforces this partisan orientation. Professor James Hamilton has shown that television networks take older viewers for granted but struggle hard to attract high-spending younger ones. Regular viewers tend to be older, male, and conservative, while marginal ones are likely to be younger, female, and liberal. Thus the financial interest that radio and television stations have in attracting these marginal younger listeners and viewers reinforces their ideological interest in catering to a more liberal audience.

Focusing ever more sharply on the mostly bicoastal, mostly liberal elites, and with their more conservative audience lost to Fox News or Rush Limbaugh, mainstream outlets like the *New York Times* have become more nakedly partisan. And in the Iraq War, they have kept up a drumbeat of negativity that has had a big effect on elite and public opinion alike. Thanks to the power of these media organs, reduced but still enormous, many Americans are coming to see the Iraq War as Vietnam redux.

Most of what I have said here is common knowledge. But it is common knowledge about a new period in American journalistic history. Once, powerful press owners dictated what their papers would print, sometimes irresponsibly. But that era of partisan and circulation-building distortions was not replaced by a commitment to objective journalism; it was replaced by a deep suspicion of the American government. That suspicion, fueled in part by the Vietnam and Watergate controversies, means that the government, especially if it is a conservative one, is surrounded by journalists who doubt almost all it says. One obvious result is that since World War II there have been few reports of military heroes; indeed, there have been scarcely any reports of military victories.

This change in the media is not a transitory one that will give way to a return to the support of our military when it fights. Journalism, like so much scholarship, now dwells in a postmodern age in which truth is hard to find and statements merely serve someone's interests.

The mainstream media's adversarial stance, both here and abroad, means that whenever a foreign enemy challenges us, he will know that his objective will be to win the battle not on some faraway bit of land but among the people who determine what we read and watch. We won the Second World War in Europe and Japan, but we lost in Vietnam and are in danger of losing in Iraq and Lebanon in the newspapers, magazines, and television programs we enjoy. ▪

Now the GOP Is *For* Affirmative Action?

Abandoning principle may not even be smart politics.

Harry Stein

TERU IWASAKI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ten years ago, the historic passage of California's Proposition 209 banning racial preferences in public contracting and university admissions seemed to promise that colorblind government would soon prevail nationwide. Today, though, affirmative action remains on the books almost everywhere in America. Those who've kept preferences alive include the usual coalition of left-wing activists, a strongly pro-affirmative-action media, business and civic groups anxious to avoid charges of racism, and, hardly least, judges who haven't hesitated to give their own political views the force of law. But what's arguably hurt the anti-preferences drive most has been the desertion of its formerly best ally: the Republican Party.

Nowhere has this Republican desertion been starker than in Michigan, where an almost exact replica of Prop. 209, mandating that the state "shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color or ethnicity, or national origin" is on this fall's ballot. Led by its candidates for governor and U.S. Senator, the state GOP has emphatically distanced itself from the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative.

Not only has GOP opposition enabled pro-affirmative-action forces to cast those fighting quotas as ideological pariahs, so far out of the mainstream (and, by implication, so tainted by racist bigotry) that not even *Republicans* want anything to do with them; it also has severely hampered the MCRI's fund-raising efforts, with many would-be contributors reluctant to cross the party leadership. "I can't tell you how many people have whispered in my ear, 'I'm with you, but I can't say anything publicly,'" confides a frustrated Jennifer Gratz, the MCRI's executive director and the former lead plaintiff in a landmark affirmative-action lawsuit against the University of Michigan. "There's just this fear of standing up and doing the right thing."

Even more disheartening, the Republican backtracking on preferences in Michigan reflects a quiet but steady shift in the national party, too, with the Bush administration undercutting affirmative-action foes—longtime GOP supporters—by embracing the "diversity" mantra that liberals so fervently preach.

The contrast with the GOP's principled recent past is striking. At his first press conference after assuming office in 1981, President Ronald Reagan noted that many affirmative-action programs had become rigid quotas, adding: "I'm old enough to remember when quotas existed in the U.S. for the purpose of discrimination, and I don't want to see that happen again." Reagan's assistant attorney general for civil rights, the combative William Bradford Reynolds, echoed the anti-preferences view, judging affirmative action "demeaning because it says people are going to get ahead not because of what they can do but because of race." While federal bureaucrats and congressional Democrats often frustrated the Reagan administration's efforts to curb quotas, the president's position was never in doubt, and it set the tone for the party.

SAVE
Brown
vs.
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www.bamn.

Pro-affirmative-action forces charged that ending race preferences would roll back civil rights.

Black California businessman Ward Connerly was among the many drawn to the GOP by the force of Reagan's personality and straightforward commitment to principle, changing his party registration the very day after he met then-governor Reagan in 1969. Twenty-seven years later, after discovering as a trustee of the University of California system the extent to which skin color determined admission to top campuses like UCLA and Berkeley, he was leading the fight for Prop. 209. Then, as now, the viciousness of the opposition (headed by future Kerry campaign guru Bob Shrum) knew no bounds. Television ads attacking the measure depicted cross burnings and police dogs, seeking to link anti-preferences forces with the ugliest anti-integration backlash of the civil rights era; Prop. 209 foes at Cal State Northridge actually invited KKK leader David Duke to campus to speak on *behalf* of the measure.

But support for Prop. 209 was broad and deep, and included many influential figures in business and politics. Most notably, its chief sponsor, Republican governor Pete Wilson, effectively countered the other side's race-baiting by arguing that those fighting to make race a nonfactor in government decision making were abiding by the civil rights crusade's true values. "It is time for those who have resisted Prop. 209 to acknowledge that equal rights under law, not special preferences, is the law of the land," he declared. "A measure that eliminates any form of discrimination based on race and gender violates no one's constitutional rights."

In the end, 209 passed comfortably, with 54 percent of the vote. Republican Party support was "vital," recalls Connerly. "They provided us with a lot of foot soldiers and, even more essential, a critical mass of support—because nobody ever likes to be left standing alone, especially when it comes to race."

The same scenario played out in Washington State in 1998, where Connerly led the fight for that state's anti-preferences measure, I-200. While some Republican moderates, including then-governor Dan Evans, opposed the initiative, the conservative-controlled state GOP enthusiastically endorsed it; and though foes outspent supporters by nearly three to one—with such liberal-leaning corporate Goliaths as Eddie Bauer, Microsoft, and Starbucks contributing heavily to the "No on 200" campaign—the initiative passed by a whopping 58 to 42 percent. The margin is even more impressive when examined in its particulars. According to exit polls, 80 percent of Republicans supported I-200, but so did 62 percent of independents and 41 percent of Democrats. In fact, Democratic senator Patty Murray was one of the measure's most vocal critics, and 43 percent of her supporters voted for it.

There's little evidence of any change in public attitudes about racial preferences since. The Republican rank and file remains especially united: a poll of Michigan GOP voters earlier this year, for instance, showed 78 percent backing the MCRI. So the party's turnabout on the issue can seem bewildering.

The shift on preferences clearly involves naked political calculation. With a mere 8 percent of blacks voting GOP in 2004, party leaders have made no secret of their eagerness to try to splinter the most reliable of Democratic voting blocs. Over the last year and a half, party chairman Ken Mehlman has appeared before numerous black audiences, preaching the virtues of Republicanism. As the *New York Times* noted in a lengthy and laudatory piece on Mehlman in July, the GOP chairman believes that "Republican advocacy of economic policies that would give more power to individuals rather than to government—like health saving accounts—would appeal to middle-class black voters as much as it would to whites."

All well and good. But as the *Times* (approvingly) points out, Mehlman's outreach agenda hardly ends there. He has also repeatedly "apologized for what he described as the racially polarized politics of some Republicans over the past 25 years" and for "what civil rights leaders view as decades of racial politics practiced or countenanced by Republicans. One example they point to is the first President Bush's use of the escape of Willie Horton, a black convicted murderer, to portray his Democratic opponent in the 1988 election, Michael S. Dukakis, as soft on crime."

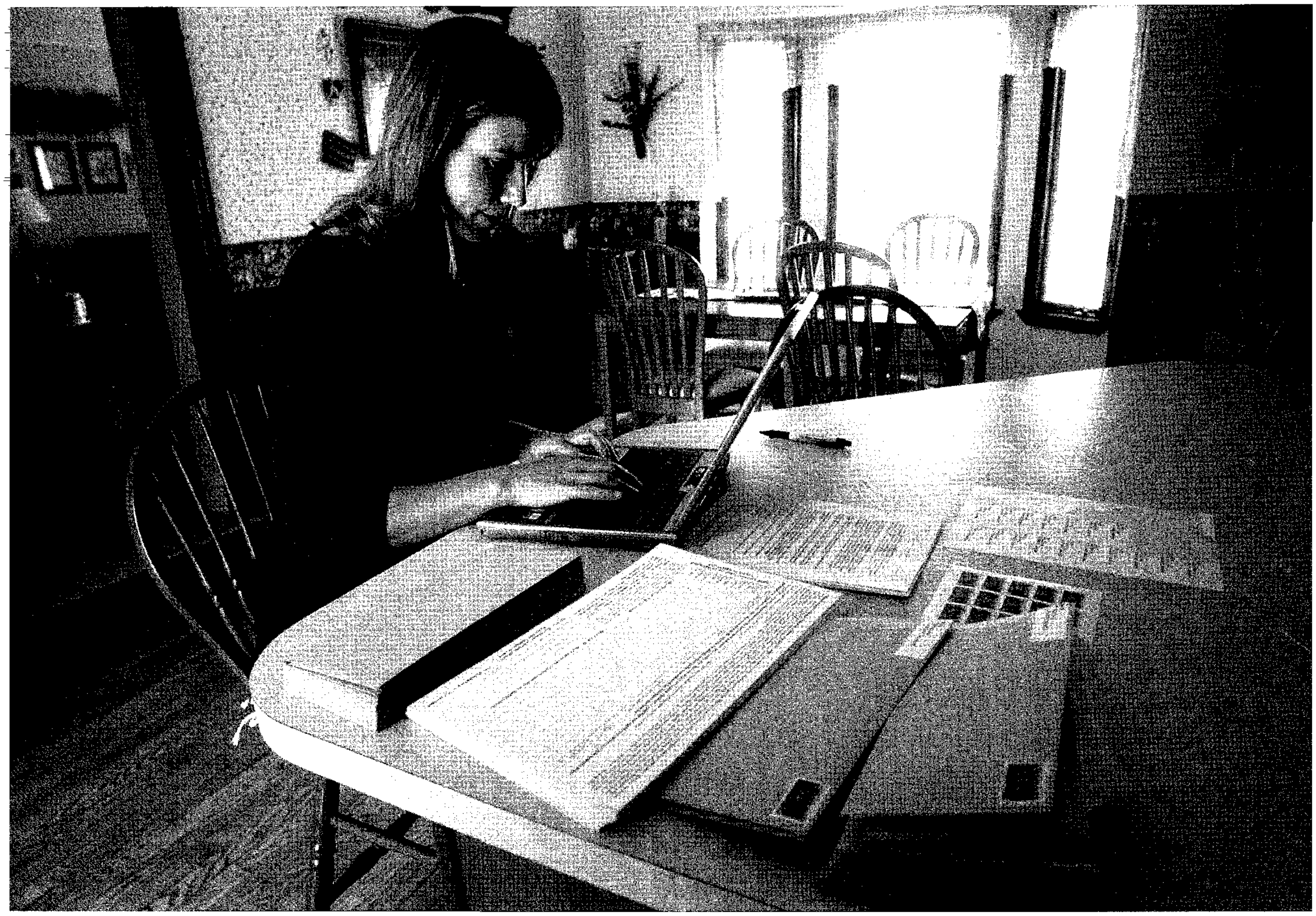
That Republicans have long cynically exploited race is a given for the *Times*'s "civil rights leaders" and liberals in general. But that the Republican chairman now accepts such a proposition is astonishing. In fact, it's easy to make the case that, in recent years, the civil rights establishment and its Democratic allies have been the true cynics—and effective ones—in playing the race card to achieve electoral and policy ends. One can argue that the Horton ad, tough as it was, made a legitimate point, highlighting a significant Dukakis policy failure. But no such claim would be possible about the ad that the NAACP produced in 2000, linking George W. Bush to the brutal murder of a black man, James Byrd, by racist thugs. Consider, too, the shameless smear campaign that Senate liberals (with a substantial assist from the mainstream media) waged against Judge Charles Pickering, a man who admirably stood up for civil rights in Mississippi at a time when few whites did so, yet who now found himself portrayed as soft on cross burners and thus unfit for a seat on the Fifth Circuit Court.

But another reality has also prompted the Republican shift on race: race remains the most volatile and, for white politicians, the most terrifying issue in American life. The mere hint of a "racism" charge transforms even normally principled leaders into panderers and cowards.

The brilliant social critic Shelby Steele gives the best explanation for this fear. Of mixed race himself, Steele writes of the paramount role that "white guilt" plays in contemporary American race relations. Conscious of the stain of the nation's discriminatory past, whites often feel a powerful need "to demonstrate to the world that they're not bigots." They do so most readily by deferring, at least publicly, to the civil rights establishment on matters of racial justice.

Ward Connerly has repeatedly witnessed this dynamic at work firsthand. "I've often had the experience of speaking in a room of 100 people, and knowing that 99 of them agree with me," he says. "But if there's one angry black person in the audience who disagrees, that person controls the room. He'll go on about the last 400 years, and institutional racism, and 'driving while black,'

DETROIT NEWS



Jennifer Gratz, who sued and lost for admission to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, now spearheads the anti-affirmative-action Michigan Civil Rights Initiative.

and the other 99 will just sit there and fold like a cheap accordion."

As official Republican support has fallen away, it is largely black conservatives like Connerly and Steele who have continued to lead the challenge to government-sanctioned discrimination. Unburdened by white guilt, keenly attuned to the damage that the preferences regime has done not only to society at large but to its purported beneficiaries, they do not hesitate to speak uncomfortable truths that conventional politicians shun. They passionately argue that racial preferences, by their very nature, convey the message that—unlike other Americans—blacks can't succeed by merit; that even as they encourage blacks to wrap themselves in the mantle of victimhood, preferences stigmatize all black achievement as illegitimate. Worse still, the racial spoils system has done nothing to help those whose lives are in the most desperate disarray: the black urban underclass.

"What affirmative action says is that blacks are fundamentally deficient and in need of special compensation based on events none of us even lived through," asserts columnist and radio talk-show host Mychal Massie. "I frankly have to wonder whether those who continue to countenance racial preferences truly even care about the problems plaguing black America, because they obviously don't care whether it works. It does nothing, *nothing*, to address out-of-wedlock births, fatherlessness, the illiteracy rate, attitudes about education, any of the issues that are destroying the black community in the country. It only allows those who support it to feel virtuous while they *avoid* facing those issues."

Adds Massie: "It is frankly inconceivable to me that anyone who claims to believe in fairness would countenance that people in Michigan are being denied a seat in the classroom based on nothing more than the fact that they're white. That is just as vile as it was when Bull Connor and Orval Faubus locked people out because they were black."

It was an old-fashioned liberal, a veteran philosophy professor at the University of Michigan named Carl Cohen, who set in motion the events that eventually led to the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative. A former head of the state ACLU and a vigorous defender of individual rights, Cohen filed a Freedom of Information request in 1996 that forced the university to lay bare its admissions procedures. The evidence showed not only that university officials "had discriminated by race but that they intended to do so, they made no bones about it," Cohen says. Indeed, the documents revealed that the admissions office had two distinct tracks: one for whites and the other for protected minorities.

Within months of the revelation, both the undergraduate division of the university and the law school faced legal challenges. The 17-year-old daughter of a police sergeant in a working-class Detroit suburb and the first in her family aiming for college, Jennifer Gratz had been turned down by the Ann Arbor campus that she'd long dreamed of attending in favor of "some friends of mine, kids I sat next to in class," who clearly didn't measure up to her academically. "I really had trouble at first believing they would do that," she says now, laughing at her naivety. "It was so against everything I'd been taught was right—that you treat everyone fairly and equally." In short order, she signed on as a plaintiff.

By the time the Supreme Court handed down its twin decisions in *Gratz* v. *Bollinger* and *Grutter* v. *Bollinger* in 2003, Gratz had long since graduated from college—at the University of Michigan's less prestigious Dearborn campus. By allowing the university in effect to continue to use race as a factor in admissions—and a recent study from the Center for Equal Opportunity found the school's discrimination against white and Asian applicants to be worse than ever—those rulings sparked the next phase of the battle against preferences: the push to institute a state constitutional ban, via the MCRI.

For preference foes, the Supreme Court battle was a disappointment in another crucial respect: it signaled the Bush administration's abandonment of the cause. True, the administration, acting ostensibly on behalf of Gratz and the others unfairly denied admission to the university, submitted two *amicus curiae* briefs to the court, arguing that the University of Michigan's quota-based admissions system was "plainly unconstitutional." But the briefs also provided key fodder for the other side by agreeing that "diversity," that vague feel-good catchall that liberals have enshrined as a primary good, "is an important and entirely legitimate government objective."

As journalist Christopher Caldwell noted at the time, "The Bush memos are the most important substantive defense of affirmative action ever issued by a sitting president. If the Court accepts the president's reasoning, it will have rescued affirmative action from what appeared to be a terminal constitutional illogic. More than that—it will have secured for this rickety program an indefinite constitutional legitimacy." Caldwell proved prescient, the administration's "diversity" argument being precisely the one that Justice Sandra Day O'Connor cited for her pivotal vote in the 5–4 decision. "Effective participation by members of all racial and ethnic groups in the civil life of our nation is essential if the dream of one nation, indivisible, is to be realized," O'Connor declared, writing for the majority.

Opinion divides on the anti-preferences side about who bears the greatest responsibility for the administration's revised affirmative-action stance. According to Terrence Pell, lead attorney for the Center for Individual Rights, which represented the plaintiffs in the U-M cases, "We'd been assured the Justice Department was going to take a strong position that diversity was not a compelling interest and that [then–solicitor general] Ted Olson's shop had already written a brief taking on the diversity rationale. But this started a huge fight and [White House counsel] Alberto Gonzales put his foot down and forced the change in direction."

Ward Connerly, who has again helped lead the fight against preferences in Michigan, speculates that the administration's skittishness on the issue goes even higher. He recalls that when he first encountered then-governor George W. Bush in Texas, the future president was "extremely open" on the issue of preferences. "He threw his arm around me and said, 'I want you to come up to the mansion, we've got to get together and talk about this.' And I thought, 'Wow, this is great,' " Connerly recalls. But when he tried to follow up, Connerly recounts, "I was told that Karl Rove doesn't think that's a good idea right now, we'll get back to you later. To this day, it's never happened."

For the first five years of his presidency, Bush refused to appear before the NAACP's annual convention, citing, as he did in 2004, "the rhetoric and the names they've called me." That vituperation has continued unabated—perhaps even escalated. "Their idea of equal rights," NAACP chairman Julian Bond said of Republicans this past February, "is the American flag and the Confederate swastika flying side by side." Nonetheless, the president has now made his peace with the organization. In a platitude-heavy address to its 2006 convention, he spoke of how "racism still lingers in America" and referred warmly to Jesse Jackson and Julian Bond. "I understand that many African-Americans distrust my political party," he added. "I want to change the relationship."

There's no indication, though, that a changed relationship will happen anytime soon. As Illinois senator Barack Obama, a Harvard Law School pal of GOP chairman Mehlman, told the *New York Times*, "The agenda of the Republican Party keeps getting in the way of that outreach." Or, to put it more bluntly, it is impossible to out-pander the Democrats.

In fact, a pandering Republican approach is just as likely to put off many voters, including blacks who might otherwise find the party's economic and social policies attractive. Says Connerly, "Deep down, black people deeply resent being treated like children. Ultimately, the way to appeal to blacks is the same way you do to whites, by showing you believe in things and fighting for them."

> **"The Supreme Court battle signaled the Bush administration's abandonment of the anti-preferences cause."**

What the party's revised stance on race has done—aside from bolstering a civil rights establishment whose prestige had sharply declined and that remains unremittingly hostile to all that the Republican Party stands for—is leave longtime allies more vulnerable than ever to the toxic charge of "racism."

Take the telltale case of William Bennett, the former education secretary and drug czar, who found himself under assault last October for comments he made on his popular radio talk show. Discussing the controversial claim, set forth in Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner's best-selling book *Freakonomics*, that the national crime drop in recent years results in part from the prevalence of abortion among blacks, who commit crimes at a higher rate than the national average, Bennett, an abortion foe, acknowledged that "if you wanted to reduce crime, you could; if that were your sole purpose, you could abort every black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down." But—he continued—"that would be an impossible, ridiculous, and morally reprehensible thing to do."

Bennett's meaning was clear as could be, though that didn't stop the likes of Howard Dean ("Bill Bennett's hateful, inflammatory remarks regarding African-Americans are simply inexcusable") and Harry Reid (he should "issue an immediate apology not only to African-Americans but to the nation") from predictably, and no doubt deliberately, misreading it. What was startling, though, was the White House's implicit endorsement of Democratic demagoguery, with presidential press secretary Scott McClellan gravely intoning, "The President believes the comments were not appropriate."

In Michigan, those waging the campaign for colorblind admissions and hiring find themselves similarly isolated. The anti-MCRI coalition lists more than 180 sponsoring organizations, from the NAACP, the ACLU, and the League of Women Voters to the Michigan Catholic Conference, the Arab American Institute, and the YWCA. Bankrolling the pro-affirmative-action forces are, among other corporate giants, the Big Three automakers. The state's Democratic governor, Jennifer Granholm, up for reelection, voices strong support for preferences, and Detroit's Sharpton-like mayor Kwame Kilpatrick backs them even more vociferously. Kilpatrick got so carried away a few months back that he unwittingly echoed George Wallace at the schoolhouse door, declaiming: "There will be affirmative action here today, there will be affirmative action here tomorrow, there will be affirmative action in our state forever!"

But none of that opposition is likely to carry as much weight on election day as the stance struck by Granholm's Republican rival, Amway heir Dick De Vos. Though not formally listed as part of the pro-affirmative-action coalition—and he surely wishes that the issue would just go away, so he could run mainly on Michigan's disastrous economy—De Vos's tepid comments in opposition to the MCRI wind up trumpeted at every opportunity by its foes.

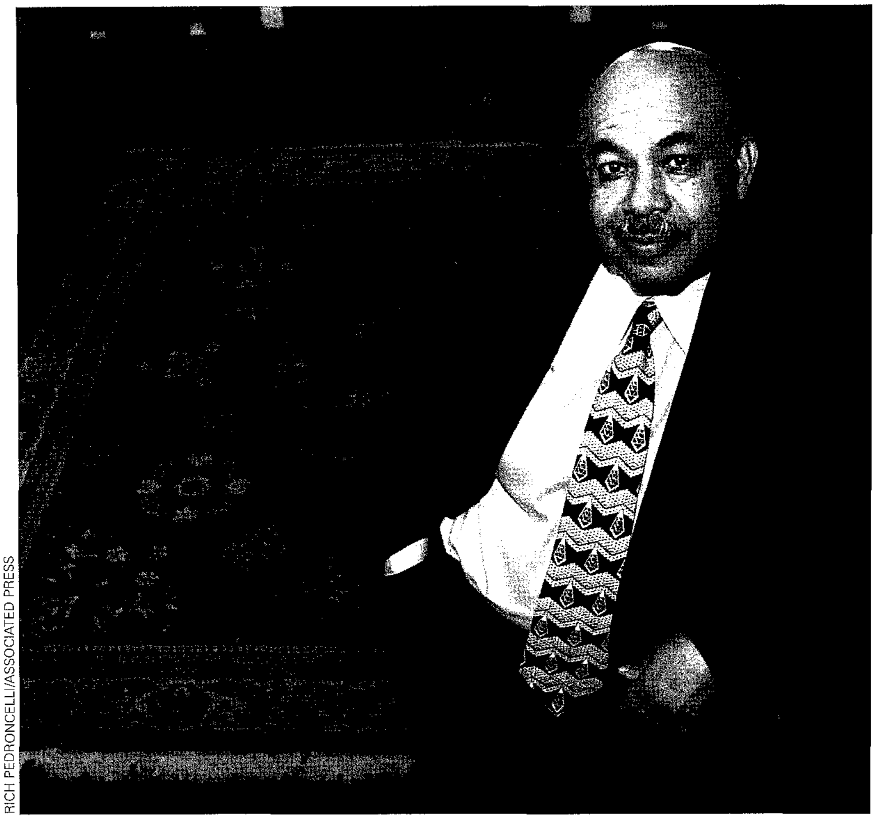
Bereft of institutional support, the MCRI runs on a shoestring, operating out of executive director Gratz's apartment outside Lansing, where the campaign's three young full-time workers sleep on the floor. Campaign manager Doug Tietz is only semi-facetious when he points to a state map and remarks, "This section here represents 6 million people—Clark's in charge of that—and John handles this area, 4 million people."

The lopsided disparity in resources has taken its toll, with the pro-MCRI forces having to counter not only a sustained ad campaign misrepresenting the measure's intent but also a series of legal assaults aimed at keeping it off the ballot. As in the earlier campaigns in California and Washington, the pro-preferences side has sought to put the focus on sex instead of race, aggressively targeting women in commercials that enumerate the alleged ways that the MCRI will hurt them. "What they say is so unbelievably false, it makes your jaw drop," complains Gratz. "MCRI would close breast cancer screening centers? Eliminate girls' sports teams? It's just ludicrous. What it *would* do is make sure girls applying to college aren't penalized if their skin's the wrong color."

Spearheading the effort to deny the MCRI ballot access has been a group called By Any Means Necessary, led by radical white activists but overwhelmingly manned by young blacks. Fitting its name, BAMN hasn't hesitated to use threats and outright intimidation to achieve its ends. On several occasions, members have set upon Gratz, cursing and spitting in her face; not long ago, she discovered that someone had tampered with her car's brakes. At the state Board of Canvassers meeting where MCRI's petitions were to be certified as valid, BAMN members caused such mayhem—screaming invective and overturning a table—that the cowed commissioners actually refused to do their job. The courts subsequently had to certify the measure for the ballot.

BAMN's main legal argument claimed that MCRI signature gatherers fooled innumerable black voters into signing the group's petitions by misrepresenting the initiative as pro-affirmative-action—an implausible contention, given the clear description of the measure's intent at the top of every petition. In any case, the anti-preferences campaign collected a record 508,000-plus signatures. Since certification required only 317,517 signatures, the measure would have qualified even if officials had disallowed every conceivable disputed signature.

Even after state courts had repeatedly shot down its challenges, though, BAMN, joined by Mayor Kilpatrick, went to federal court, charging the MCRI with violating the Voting Rights Act. In a courtroom packed with BAMN's young and obstreperous rank and file this August, the judge hearing the case, Arthur Tarnow—an NAACP member, former legal aid lawyer, and Clinton appointee—made little effort to hide his hostility toward the MCRI. Even as he severely limited the MCRI attorneys' ability to question BAMN witnesses who claimed that signature gatherers had hoodwinked them, he gave BAMN's attorneys free rein to rip into Gratz and the MCRI.


RICH PEDRONCELLI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Veteran anti-racial-preferences campaigner Ward Connerly supports the Michigan initiative.

While finally even Tarnow could not find any Voting Rights Act grounds on which to strike the MCRI from the ballot—a move that almost surely would have been overturned on appeal—his ruling gave its foes a massive cudgel with which to beat it down, not only agreeing with BAMN's inflammatory charges but expanding on them. The MCRI, he wrote, had sought to deceive not just blacks but "appears to have targeted all Michigan voters for deception without regard to race."

A year ago, polls showed the MCRI winning easily with upward of 60 percent. Now the numbers have tightened, with one of the most recent polls showing it in a dead heat, and the other showing it ahead by four points.

But whatever the result—and voters notoriously lie to pollsters on issues involving race—the party's role in the contest is something many thoughtful Republicans will regard with sorrow. If the MCRI loses, it will demonstrate yet again the damage done by the party's flight from principle; if it wins, it will stand as even more evidence that the GOP is on the wrong side not only of its base, but of history.

"It truly makes you yearn for a return of leaders like Ronald Reagan or Pete Wilson," says Connerly of recent events in Michigan. "People who knew what they believed and weren't afraid to act on their beliefs. You really have to wonder where people like that have gone."

A Social-Uplift Program That Works

The Queens Library's secret: help those who help themselves

Nicole Gelinas

The Queens Library is that rare New York phenomenon: a government-funded social-uplift program that works. It succeeds by doing what it has done for over a century: giving New Yorkers with ambition (however modest or grand it may be) the tools they need for self-improvement. These tools get real results in Gotham, where people can earn an incremental reward for each skill they obtain. Learn English, and move from a kitchen job to an office job. Master math, and pass the GED and start technical college. The Queens Library's crowded branches suggest that many poor and immigrant New Yorkers understand the city's opportunities for upward mobility and that they see themselves not at all as victims trapped by circumstance but as individuals possessing the independence, the self-discipline, and the chance to get ahead.

Libraries aren't sexy to city policymakers, though. Mayor Michael Bloomberg's recently released blueprint for fighting poverty contained not one word about New York's three public library systems. Like his 1960s predecessor John Lindsay, Bloomberg prefers ministering to the city's perpetually poor rather than lending a hand to working-class and immigrant families who, just by their presence in the library, have already shown a thirst for self-improvement.

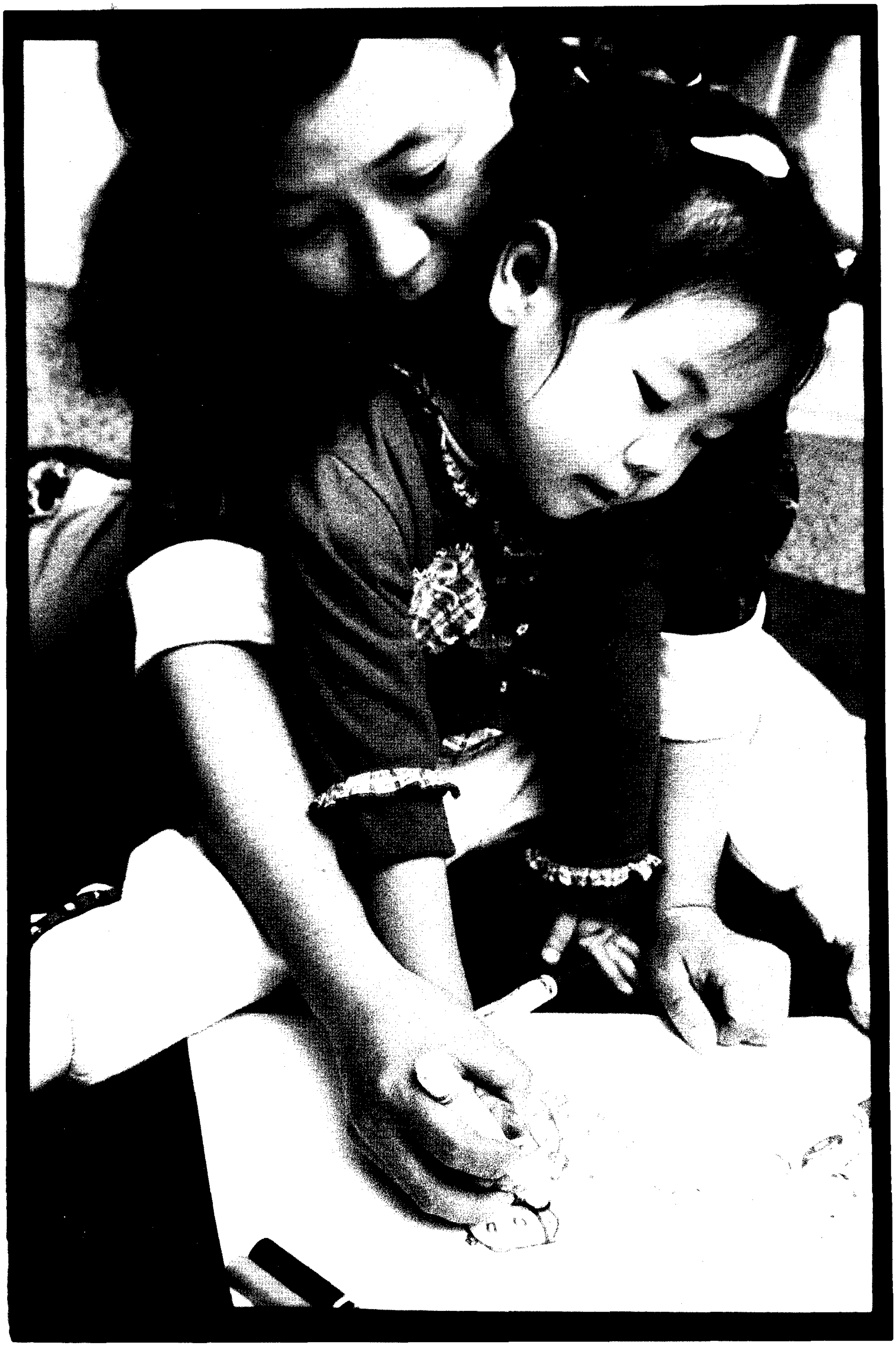
Since they're such a low government priority these days, the city's libraries have had to cut back on hours. For all its excellence, then, the Queens Library doesn't meet the standard set by public libraries' first great patron, Andrew Carnegie. Libraries, he believed, should "be accessible at all reasonable hours and times, free of expense," with reading rooms "open every day of the week except Sunday . . . from at least nine o'clock a.m. to at least nine o'clock p.m."

Queens built the backbone of its library system largely with Carnegie money—$240,000 of it, over $5 million in today's dollars—which began to arrive in 1901. The steel magnate endowed eight Queens branches not only with capital but also with a lasting philosophy, reflecting his own working-class experience and decades of thinking about how best to uplift the poor. In divesting his vast fortune at the end of the nineteenth century, Carnegie believed it wisest to help "those, who, being most anxious and able to help themselves, deserve and will be benefited by . . . the extension of their opportunities by the aid of the philanthropic rich," rather than (as he saw it) wasting his money on the "irreclaimably destitute [and] shiftless."

Carnegie seized on public libraries as central to this mission, in part because a private library had served him so well in his youth. When at 12 he emigrated with his family to Allegheny, Pennsylvania, he had finished only five years of formal schooling in his native Scotland. Completing his schooling in America was out of the question: to help support his family, he had to go to work, first in a Pittsburgh factory and later in a telegraph office. Though Carnegie enjoyed working, he still wanted to "improve himself" by learning, especially the history and government of his new country. Unfortunately, working until 11 PM on alternate nights "did not leave [him] much time for self-improvement, nor did the wants of the family leave any money to spend on books," he later recalled.

The family literacy class at the Flushing branch . . .

Photographs by Bobby Neel Adams



Carnegie found a partial remedy in the library of Colonel James Anderson, who let "working boys" peruse his 400 volumes on Saturday afternoons and borrow one book each per week. Through Anderson's generosity, Carnegie devoured Macaulay, Shakespeare, and other classic authors, and the colonel's library also kept him "clear of low fellowship." One key advantage of funding libraries, Carnegie came to realize, is that they give "nothing for nothing." At the library, people "must acquire knowledge themselves. There is no escape from this."

By the turn of the century, Carnegie had honed his philosophy into a library-funding effort that operated with businesslike efficiency. It would eventually approve applications for more than 2,800 public libraries, 65 in New York City alone. Because Carnegie saw libraries—rightly—as public infrastructure, he only funded initial capital costs. Town and city leaders had to agree to pay operating costs.

Even before Carnegie began disbursing his funds, the working-class and middle-class residents of Queens had shown a thirst for knowledge and self-improvement, and looked to libraries to help satisfy it.

Railroads and proximity to ports and to bustling Brooklyn and Manhattan had made Queens ideal for factories in the late 1800s. As people followed investment, the borough's population swelled fivefold, to more than 150,000 around the turn of the century. Pooling resources, the immigrants who toiled in the factories of Queens and populated its villages started a dozen hodgepodge private libraries, while two of the borough's biggest employers—Conrad Poppenhusen's rubber plant and William Steinway's piano factory—set up free libraries for grateful workers and their families, with half the volumes in German to accommodate new immigrants.

Queens had already started to incorporate its libraries into a formal public system when Carnegie's funds began pouring in. The directors, who shared the industrialist's philanthropic vision of presenting opportunity to all comers, realized that one of the library's key mandates would be to assimilate immigrants. The branches wooed newcomers unfamiliar with free public libraries, posting ads at local movie houses advising that "the public library is the working man's college. Use it." The libraries circulated flyers in Italian and Polish and advertised the availability of "books for businessmen" at ferry terminals and books "for mothers" at the Astoria milk station, recounts Jeffrey Kroessler in his centennial history of the Queens Library, *Lighting the Way*.

The library's second big responsibility was to help kids, including those whose parents worked too hard to supervise them adequately. For Carnegie, one could find "no use to which money could be applied so productive of good to boys and girls who have good within them and ability and ambition to develop it, as the founding of a public library in a community which is willing to support it as a municipal institution." Children's librarians, introduced a decade or so after the Queens Library's official founding, pioneered story hours and lobbied to keep branches open evenings, noting that 12- to 14-year-olds came to the library "because they've no place else that is equally wholesome to go." The library soon boasted hours more typical today of a customer-friendly retail store than of a government institution: "seven days a week, from 9 to 9 daily, and 4 to 9 Sundays—a total of 77 hours a week—and holiday mornings from 9 to 11."

Queens Library directors didn't allow grand plans to carry them away. When Carnegie awarded his library grant, the "original plan was to erect three grand edifices," Kroessler writes. Instead, Queens built eight modest but dispersed branches, so that residents of the aptly named Far Rockaway, for example, wouldn't have to travel several miles to admire a "grand edifice" when all they wanted was to borrow books. As the borough's population continued to increase, the Queens Library built more small outposts. Today, no Queens resident lives more than a mile from one of the library's 63 branches.

The Queens Library stuck to its traditional mission, even after the borough's demography changed and a very different idea of how to achieve social uplift—emphasizing victimhood and government handouts, not self-empowerment—became prevalent in the sixties. When poor blacks from the south and from Manhattan and Brooklyn flocked to parts of Queens after World War II, the library ably served the newcomers, expanding into six newly built housing projects and using its bookmobile to introduce poor black children to reading. During the sixties, when other nonprofits were embracing the new welfare-state ethos, the library focused on introducing books to bookless homes and teaching parents in low-income neighborhoods like the South Jamaica Houses how to read to their children.

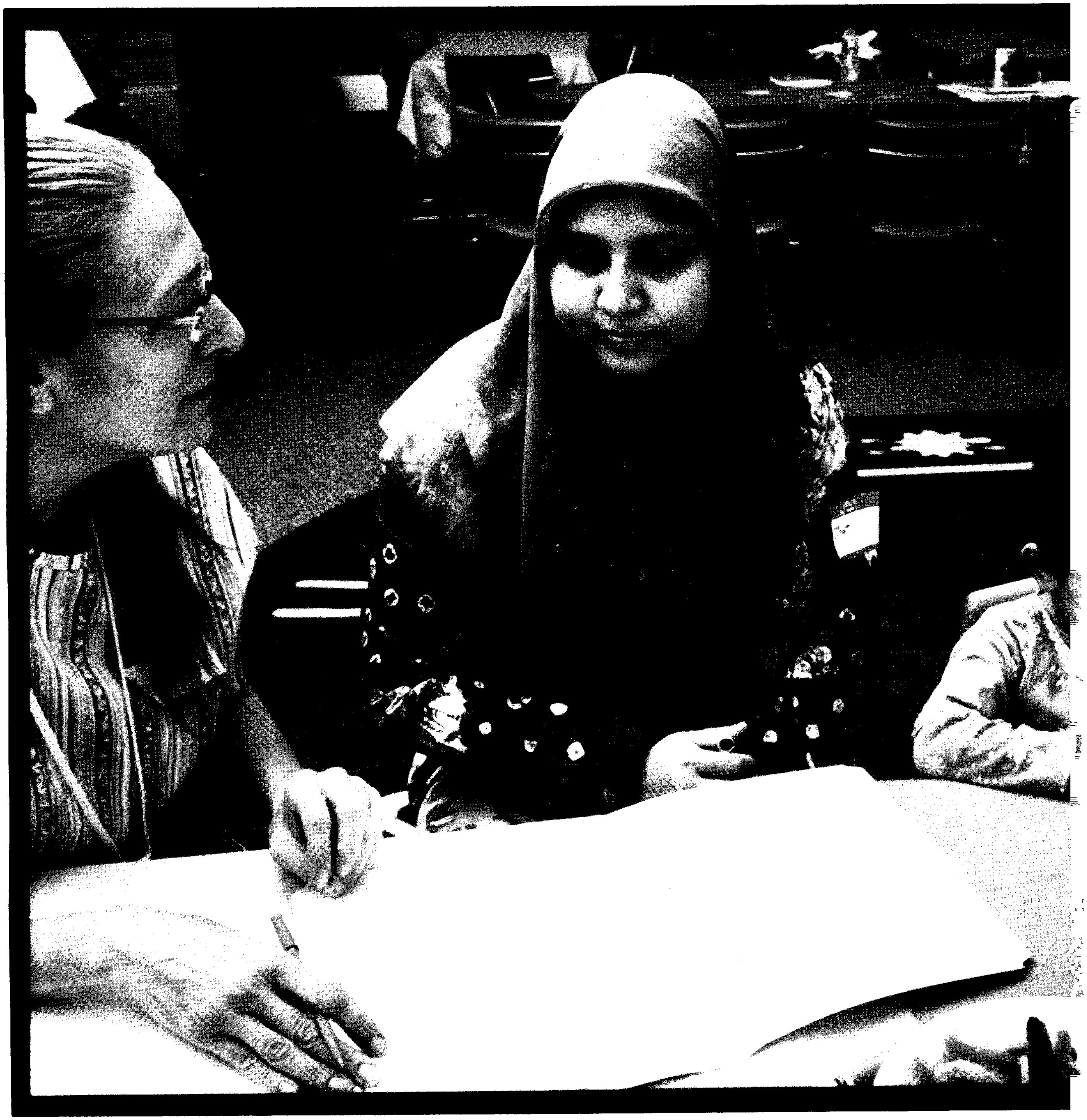
> **“The library recognizes a key truth: newcomers can't succeed in America unless they speak English.”**

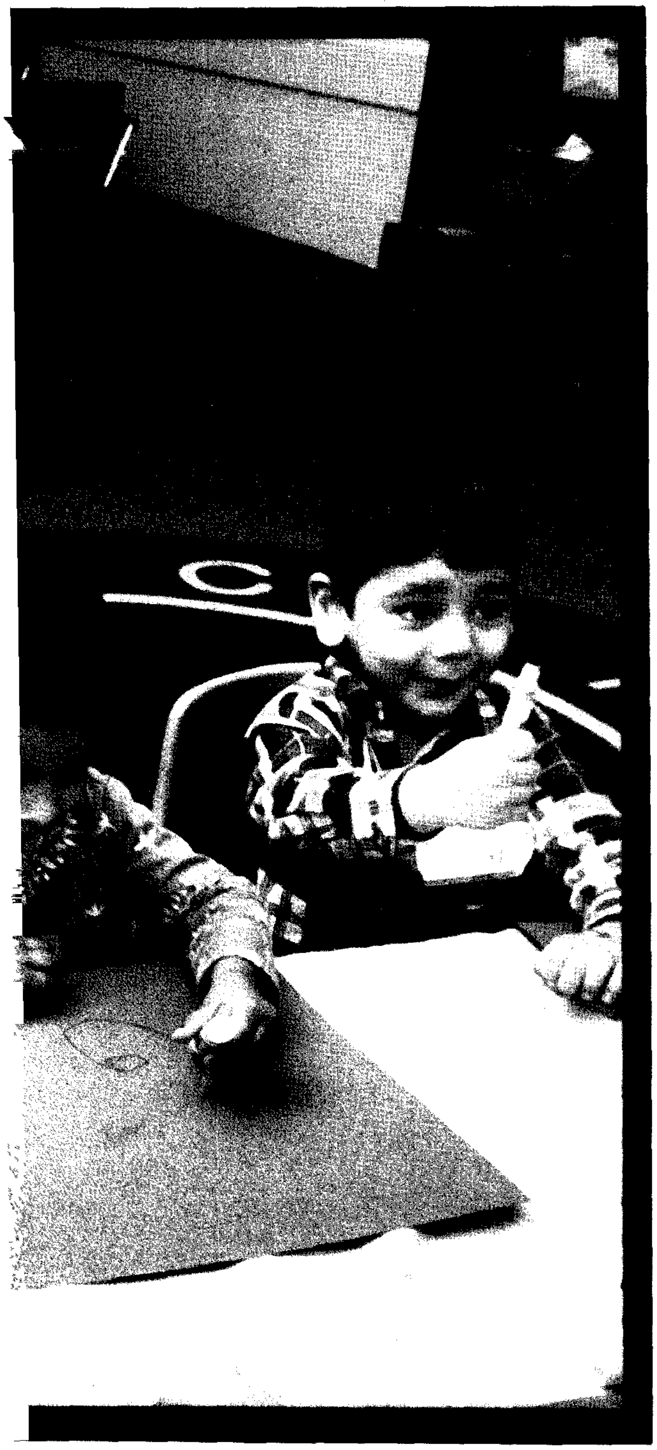
As immigration and upward mobility have continued to reinvigorate Queens over the last two decades, circulation has doubled. Last year, 811,000 “active borrowers”—nearly 40 percent of the borough's population—visited the library 14.3 million times, borrowing 20 million items. Each year, the library lends an average of nine books or other items for each Queens resident, more than twice the per-capita number of volumes than the New York Public Library lends in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island. Queens's per-capita number puts it near the top in library circulation nationwide, just behind San Jose and Phoenix. Half a million people a year attend at least one of the library's free educational programs, ranging from homework help sessions to classes on dining etiquette to academic lecture series on such topics as “The Path of the Ancient Greek Philosophers” and “Turkey's Entrance into the EU: Problems and Prospects.”

But numbers don't convey the full extent of the public's demand. On one recent Tuesday at the Flushing branch, a dozen or so people were there a quarter-hour before the official opening time of 1 PM, waiting to get in. Just a half-hour into its day, the Flushing library becomes as crowded as a bus station, with patrons browsing the amply stacked bookstands, working on computers, and reading and writing at tables. Despite the crowds, the library stays quiet, suggesting that a certain reverence goes with the enthusiasm. Even children and teenagers, though they run and holler up the library's outdoor steps, hush without prompting once inside and get right to work.

Because nearly half of the residents of Queens are foreign-born, one of the library's most practical services is to help the borough's African, Asian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern immigrants assimilate into American society, just as it helped German, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants become citizens a century ago. The library is particularly effective at this task, because it recognizes a key truth lost on many contemporary immigrant-advocacy groups: newcomers can't succeed in America unless they speak English. Hence the library's wildly popular, and free, English-for-Speakers-of-a-Second-Language program—the largest such initiative in the nation, serving 3,000 students annually. Each semester, the program must turn people away, sometimes two prospective students for every one who gets a slot.

Take the Number 7 train to Main Street in Flushing, walk two blocks to the spacious four-story curved-glass library, and you'll see how keen many Queens newcomers are to learn English. In the basement adult learning center, as many as 40 students will be listening to English-pronunciation CDs, doing grammar exercises on computers, watching language videos, reading vocabulary texts, and engaging in halting conversation with one another in a new tongue. One recent Thursday morning, a dozen adult students listened intently as a librarian took them on a tour of the center, explaining in slow, clear English the wealth of materials available. When she'd finished, the students eagerly examined





the shelves, filled with books on everything from basic vocabulary to idioms, as if they'd stumbled upon a treasure trove.

While many students can learn to read and even write English on their own, several told me, they cannot learn to speak it by themselves—and often there's no one to practice with at home. That's why so many students crowd into the library's English classes. During the first session of a nine-week class at the Flushing branch, focusing on job readiness, nine immigrant students—their backgrounds ranging from Ecuador to Bulgaria to China—met in a room with walls papered with large-print conjugations of irregular English verbs. Instructor Heather Dutiel detailed in careful cadence the basics of looking for a job in America, explaining tricky verbs—the difference between "have you" and "do you"—at points in the lecture. After some instruction, Dutiel showed sample resumés and asked the students to discuss their job searches among themselves. The students, with various English-fluency levels, spoke tentatively in their only common language, asking what kind of employment each sought—"Full- or part-time?" "In Queens or Manhattan?"—then writing down the answers to read to the class.

The course satisfies a real hunger for self-improvement. Sandra, 33, came here nine months ago from China and works in a bakery on Main Street, Flushing. She'd love to learn enough English—"telephone English," as she puts it—to find better-paying work in a Manhattan office. Galina Stoyanova, 38, was a college-educated engineer with nearly two decades' work experience in Bulgaria, but she applied with her husband for the green-card lottery, wanting their 12-year-old to get an American education. Because Galina isn't English-proficient, she's had to work at a discount store near Times Square to pay the bills. She wants to learn enough English to begin working again in her field.

Similar striving animates the Central Library of Queens, in Jamaica: on any weekday, nearly

. . . teaches kids and their parents together.

two dozen students diligently work in the adult learning center annex until the 8:30 closing time. One recent evening, eight students showed up for a conversation group, several of them after long workdays. Volunteer instructor Chris Miller asked them to introduce themselves, gently prodding them with questions about their home countries and current jobs. He then asked what the "three best things" were about living in New York. Students invariably included the word "freedom" in their answers—and they clearly view the library's resources as a key stepping-off point for making the most of that freedom.

Rachel Labonte, soft-spoken and poised, came here alone from Haiti two years ago and works at a Long Island 7-Eleven. She praises America's "advantage" in educational opportunity, and she plans to enroll at Queensborough Community College, with the hope of becoming a psychologist. Taking advantage of the library's programs, she'll take her English-proficiency test for college entrance in November. Mathilde, from Morocco and now working in an electronics store, marvels that "with English" she could "have any job," while Duge Desforge, also from Haiti, hopes to resume his civil engineering career once he's proficient.

Some immigrants take the library's language classes not only for themselves but also to help their kids flourish. "My little sons prefer to speak in English," says Ecuadoran immigrant Monica Davila of her nine- and 11-year-old boys. "What happens is, my kids say, 'you speak everything wrong.' " When she joined her first conversation group at the Jamaica branch two years ago, she knew no English, but "I practice and practice," she says—and it shows.

At the Corona branch, where the surrounding population is 80 percent Hispanic and 70 percent foreign-born, Marcela, an earnest 29-year-old who came to America from Mexico six years ago, bubbles over with the desire to learn. To assist her children in school, "I need English," she says, straining to understand my questions. With difficulty, she explains that her American-born children, aged three and five, already far outpace her in English proficiency. Her more fluent husband works from dawn to night in a local deli, so he has no time to help her learn the new language. In part to improve her English, Marcela has signed up for the library's morning crafts class, and she has tried to register twice for filled-up language classes. To help meet this kind of demand, the Corona branch invites parents to take ten weeks of "Clases de Inglés para la Familia" with their kids.

Even for children whose parents don't take the classes, the branch is often a first introduction to English, says librarian Damini Patel. In the children's section, mothers chat quietly in Spanish as their children play and read; the English-language picture books for toddlers seem just as worn as the Spanish-language books. As for older kids, they "tell their parents, 'take me to the library,' when the parents can't help with homework because they don't know enough English," Patel says.

Branch manager Diane Vitale says that while many of the library's Hispanic parents aren't "highly educated themselves, they're determined that their children get a good education." The parents consistently attend story times and toddler-literacy classes, Vitale says, and will send older children to the library several times a week, desperate for them to speak English well so that they can better their circumstances.

In addition to English classes, the library presents immigrants with something almost equally important to success in their new country: an understanding of American history, politics, and culture. The Flushing adult learning center offers walls of easy-to-read books on American government, culture, and citizenship, as well as introductory editions of the canon of English-language literature, from Jack London to Mark Twain. On nearby shelves beckon slim biographies of such key figures of American history as George Washington and Frederick Douglass, with difficult words highlighted and explained. Inspirational in a different way is an easy-to-read version of *Goldman Sachs: The Culture of Success*, chronicling the august investment-banking firm's founding a century ago—by immigrants. The Jamaica branch center offers similar texts, from biographies of notables like Sandra Day O'Connor to the collections *101 American Customs* and *101 American Superstitions*, which explain holidays like Halloween. A slim in-house pamphlet, "The Open Door of Our Lives," features past students recounting how the Queens Library helped them seize opportunity. "I came from Africa," writes Dariata. "Now I have my own salon."

The Queens Library offers formal citizenship classes, too. At one evening session in Jamaica, volunteer Margaret O'Sullivan patiently corrected translations and pronunciation as her 12 students read aloud texts on how America works, why the Pilgrims came here, and what the Bill of Rights guarantees. Signs of civic pride festooned the walls, including a poster proclaiming, "Congratulations! Hasna Harun is a U.S. citizen" and an American flag covered with variations of such student sentiments as "I came to America to have a better life."

> **“The Arverne branch overflows with the 'at risk' black teens whom antipoverty programs often target for help.”**

To help the most ambitious newcomers pursue their dreams, Flushing's International Resource Center offers more than 60,000 books and magazines, many devoted to economics and business, in 50 languages. Texts on economic regulations in the American states stand shoulder-to-shoulder with corporate case studies in Chinese dialects. On the two afternoons when I visited, nearly every chair in the center had an occupant.

Perhaps New York's most striking confirmation of Carnegie's faith in libraries as engines of social uplift is the Queens Library's modest Arverne branch, in the shadow of the elevated A-train tracks that ring Far Rockaway. Serving one of Queens's poorest neighborhoods, Arverne overflows with the "at risk" African-American teens whom antipoverty programs often target for help—teens who enthusiastically grasp the opportunities that the branch offers them.

One afternoon this fall, dozens of preteens and teens crowded into the tiny building. About ten of them, students at P.S. or I.S. 105, competed in, or watched, two chess matches—one of them played on a board that the students had made out of cardboard and origami paper. "Don't move without looking first," volunteer Lawrence McBride directed a 12-year-old boy. "I would have covered the bishop first," counsels a student watching the game. "I don't know why I sacrificed that pawn," another says. "I don't know why you did, either," a third replies.

Waiting for a turn, 12-year-old Sabla says that she plays because it "helps [me] to concentrate" in school. Karizma, also 12, who wants someday to go to Harvard Law, has "never lost" at chess since she started playing last year. She reports that she has collected dozens of strategies to "think about how to start the game, what to do first." Mercedes, 14, a student at Saint Rose of Lima, has her mind set on UCLA, to do something with "science and animals"; she likes chess because it's "challenging." McBride engages the students when they're shy, saying of 11-year-old Christopher, "He's gotten really good since April." He also eyes potential recruits, corralling one six-year-old boy making noise in the children's section to "come watch your brother win."

The middle-aged McBride, who taught the game to his own two children decades ago, runs the chess club three times weekly, he says, because encouraging abstract thinking and patient deliberation, as chess does, will help neighborhood students "excel academically," particularly in math. He's pleased when the students come to him with homework questions.

Arverne library clerk Yvonne Burks also encourages young strivers. She showed me a thick stack of book reports assigned in her after-school program that lets students "read down" library fines. Burks holds hour-long seminars on everything from sewing buttons to applying to college. "People think—and I'll just say it—that because we're a black neighborhood, we don't have high achievers. But we have many high achievers here," she said, citing students who have gone on to college and who return to the library to visit or volunteer.

Arverne's librarians keep a special eye on teenage boys, even hiring a few who've been regulars there. Hayward Pelt, 19, a tall, reserved senior at Beach Channel High School, tells me that he started spending afternoons at the library when he was 11 or 12 and has "matured since then." His part-time job is a good fit, he says, because "I have to read a lot for school"; librarians know when he has a lot of schoolwork and give him time to study. He'd like to attend San Bernardino Valley College, following his brother's footsteps, and major in architecture.

Like the other Queens Library branches, Arverne offers a simple, but crucial, benefit: a quiet place to study. There's no chaos such as reigns in some of these kids' schools and homes, but no lockdown supervision, either. As Arverne's manager, Sharon Anderson, put it, "Here the students aren't guarded. They're assisted." Each afternoon, dozens of children and teens quietly read, do homework, or use the library's computers, asking for help at their own pace; adults also come in looking for information on the GED or for help in preparing a resumé. When the students' voices grow too loud, Anderson's stern warning—"this is a library"—settles them down. Khadijah, an articulate 12-year-old who wants to be a pediatrician, has been doing her homework at the library since she was little. Last year, when she needed help for her upcoming standardized math test, the library's after-school tutor, "Miss Stacy," was always obliging. "It worried me a lot," Khadijah said of the test, "so I came in every day and prepared."

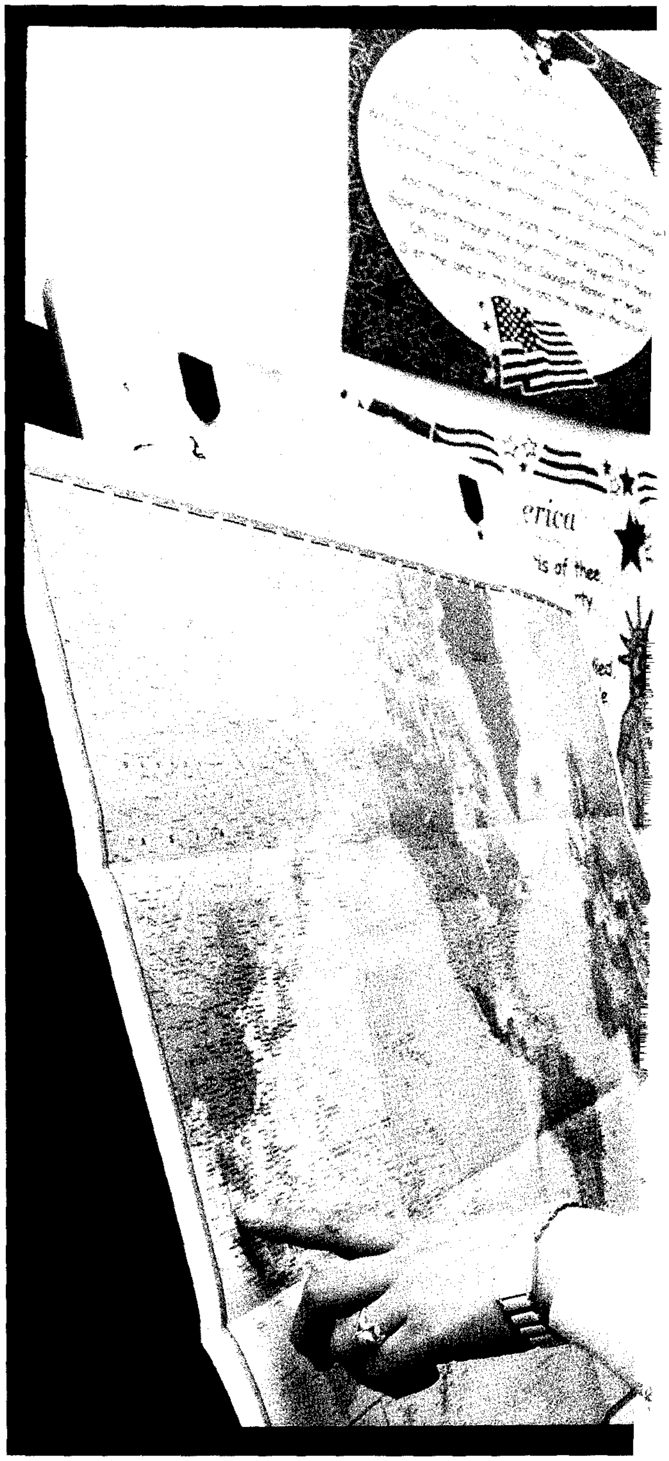
The Flushing branch's English classes for foreigners, which have more applicants than they can admit, . . .

VOICES of FREEDOM

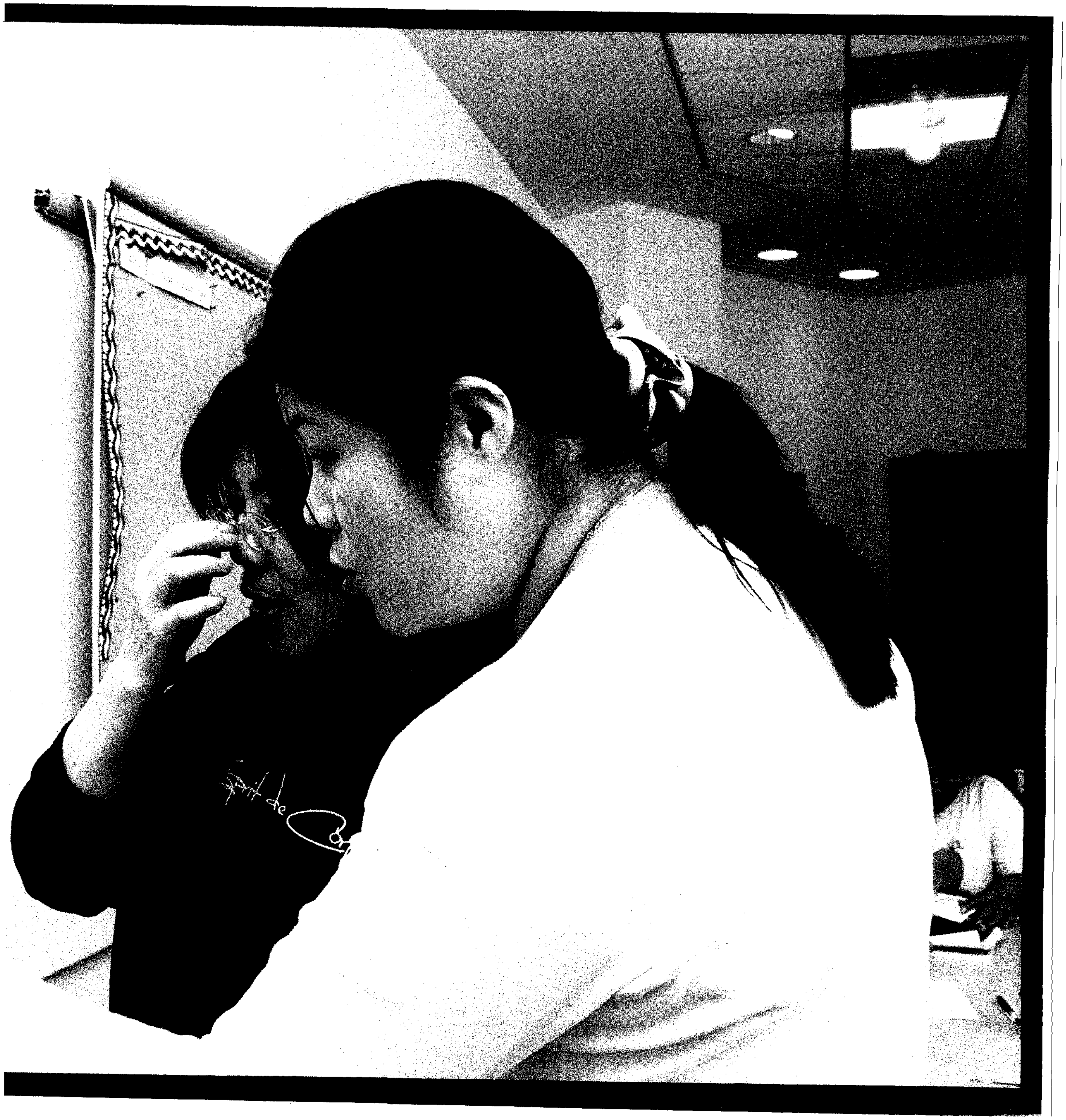
Libraries were the government's first experiment in public-private social uplift, and one of the most successful. But as New York has allowed social-services spending to devour its budget over the past half-century, the city has neglected these critical institutions. While the city does fund capital improvements to libraries (with debt), it hasn't provided the money that they need to keep the long weekday and weekend hours that their hardworking, and often long-commuting, patrons need. The typical Queens branch's hours—39 per week—are a far cry from the 77 hours that libraries kept their doors open in the early twentieth century, faithful to Carnegie's vision.

With more resources, the library would "keep the doors open" longer, says director Thomas Galante, especially on weekends, when working people are free to come. "We have wonderful things to offer inside, but people can't get to them when the library is closed." And, of course, the library could buy more books: the $10 million it spent on acquisitions last year is down $2 million from 1999, and the library's total annual spending, about $94 million, would be a rounding error in Gotham's $2.2 billion public assistance bill. With more resources, the branches could provide more homework monitors and more classes in topics such as GED preparation and English-language instruction. Several librarians, including at Arverne, told me that they'd like to contract for professional SAT-prep classes and competitive high school exam classes as well.

But despite his plans to do more to fight poverty, Mayor Bloomberg has in fact cut the library's budget, so that only 30 percent of its branches can now stay open on at least one weekend day, compared with over 90 percent before the cut. Critics would argue that the library isn't an antipoverty program, since it depends on self-selection: people have to want to do well for the library to work. But to combat poverty, why not start by helping the many poor people who want to help themselves, like those thronging the libraries of Queens?



. . . teach American culture and values along with language.



Urbanities

The Dynamo and the Jeweler

Stefan Kanfer

The Gershwins' easy American elegance

Jacob was a delinquent in the making. The 12-year-old had no use for school; the street was his academy, and roller skating and fighting his favorite subjects. His older brother, Israel, was another story: quiet, intellectual, in love with words and ideas. Understandably, their parents, Morris and Rose Gershowitz, acquired an upright with the older boy in mind. But the law of unintended consequences applied in 1910 as in any century. When Jacob sat down at the keyboard, he fluently rattled off a few popular numbers, with dazzling left-handed embellishments. As it turned out, the boy had been practicing, playing by ear on a neighbor's piano.

By then, the Gershowitzes had streamlined the family name to Gershwin, and Americanized the boys' monikers to George and Ira. In this, and in many other ways, they were no different from a lot of immigrant Russian Jews during the early twentieth century: vigorous, close-knit, eager to get on in the Promised City. Morris led the way. "My father," Ira recalled, "engaged in various activities: restaurants, Russian and Turkish baths, bakeries, a cigar store and pool parlor on the 42nd Street side of what is now Grand Central Station, bookmaking at the Brighton Beach racetrack for three exciting but disastrous weeks."

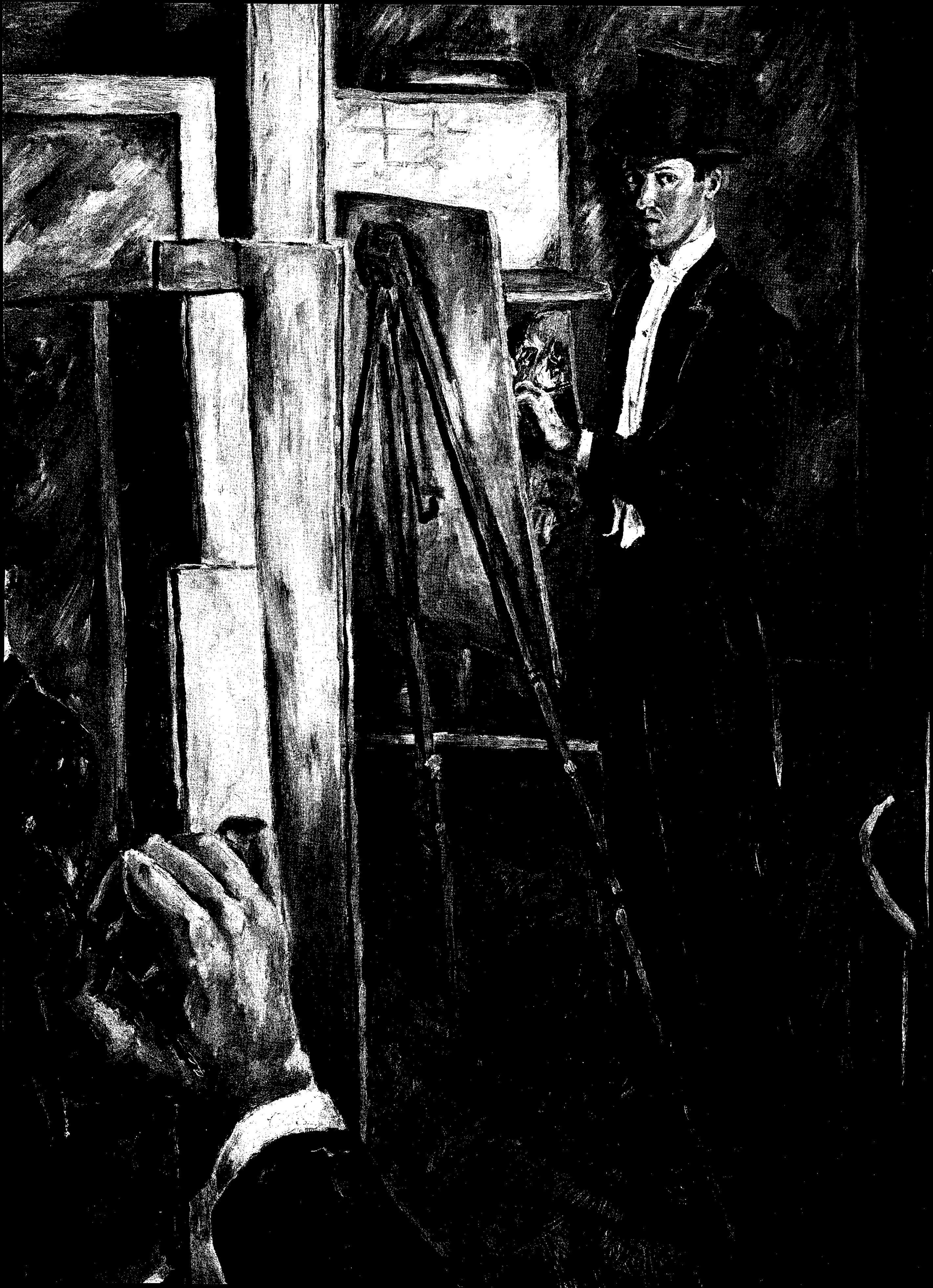
The paterfamilias preferred to be within walking distance of his various enterprises, which meant changing residences every year or so, shuttling from the Lower East Side to midtown to Brooklyn and then back again to Manhattan—some 30 locations in all, as the family fortunes swung freely from middle-class comfort to near-bankruptcy and back again. The Gershwins' two younger children, Arthur and Frances, came along during flush times, receiving closer attention and better educations than their elder siblings. In the early years, Morris's ventures absorbed at least 16 hours per day, leaving George and Ira to fend for themselves in a city full of temptations.

Ira was saved by shelves of schoolbooks, George by 88 keys. "Studying the piano made a good boy out of a bad one," George once reflected. "I was a changed person after I took it up." A procession of teachers taught him to read music and opened his ears with Chopin, Debussy, and Liszt. By the time Charles Hambitzer entered the scene, George was experimenting with a few pieces of his own, more original than the part-time conductor and composer had ever encountered. In a letter, he prophesied: "I have a pupil who will make his mark in music if anybody will. The boy is a genius, without a doubt; he's just crazy about music and can't wait until it's time to take his lesson. . . . He wants to go in for this modern stuff, jazz and what not. But I'm not going to let him for a while. I'll see that he gets a firm foundation in the classics first."

George paid close attention to his teacher for almost two years, but the modern stuff proved irresistible. At 15, he dropped out of the High School of Commerce and played himself into a job as pianist at Jerome H. Remick and Co., publishers of popular songs. He demonstrated new music in stores around the city, checked vaudeville houses to make sure that Remick songs were performed, and plugged a few of his own melodies. The pianist came to understand what the public loved and what it rejected out of hand. Isaac Goldberg, George's earliest biographer, noted that audiences "wanted snap and 'pep'; pep, indeed, was just beginning to come into our vocabulary, and by the same token, into our life. And pep was part of George's

A self-portrait by George Gershwin, amateur painter

GEOFFREY CLEMENTS/CORBIS



George Gershwin in 1930

nature. He had been made for the new day."

Irving Berlin, then America's hottest songwriter, heard George at the keyboard one afternoon. The young man's sense of harmony instantly impressed him, as did his ability to write tunes that jumped directly into the listener's brain. On the spot, Berlin offered Gershwin a job as his musical secretary—and then, on second thought, withdrew it. "You're more than the skilled arranger I'm looking for," he said. "You're a natural-born creator. This sort of job would cramp you. You're meant for big things."

Word about this meeting circulated in the old neighborhood. Boris Thomashefsky, the Yiddish theater's most commercial actor/impresario, summoned George to his Second Avenue dressing room, along with Sholom Secunda, composer of the international hit "Bei *Mir Bist Du Schoen*." Boris thought they could collaborate on a series of operettas. Each man played a few of his own tunes on the rehearsal piano. Before George hit his stride, Sholom shook his head. "The two of us are no pair," he said. "We have totally different approaches in music." Afterward, whenever the musicians met, George would pump Sholom's hand delightedly and tell anyone within listening distance, "If he had agreed to become my partner, I would now be a composer in the Yiddish theater."

Meantime, Ira, on his own track, was graduating from high school, reading a book a week, working odd jobs, and attending City College classes with his boyhood pal E. Y. "Yip" Harburg (later Harold Arlen's lyricist for *The Wizard of Oz*). The two young men tried out light verse in an undergraduate publication, writing on equal terms, until Yip announced that his favorite book of poetry was W. S. Gilbert's *Bab Ballads*. Ira informed him that the rhymes were only 50 percent of the story; music accompanied those words. This was news to Yip, who got an invite to the Gershwins' home to hear the score of *H.M.S. Pinafore* on their Victrola. "There were all the lines I knew by heart," Harburg later wrote. "I was dumbfounded, staggered!"

Ira yearned to play Gilbert to his brother's Sullivan. The trouble was, a young lyricist named Irving Caesar had already taken the position. Irving and George enjoyed working together; they turned out one catchy song in just 15 minutes. A few months later, the composer contrived to get an invitation to a party attended by Al Jolson, the most popular entertainer of the day. Gershwin worked his way to the piano and performed his and Irving's "Swanee." Jolson loved the song so much he interpolated it into his already-running Broadway show, *Sinbad*. In 1919, the phonograph record sold more than 2 million copies; you could find the sheet music in almost every parlor in the nation. George wrote several more songs with Caesar—though none as popular as "Swanee"—and then teamed with B. G. De Sylva for a series of light *Ziegfeld Follies*–style Broadway revues called *George White's Scandals*.

The third year of the Gershwin/De Sylva collaboration produced a breakthrough piece, *Blue Monday*, in which George gave notice that he was no longer content in Tin Pan Alley. He intended to be nothing less than the bridge between American popular music and classical music. Wrote biographer Goldberg, "It was the heyday of the new jazz, and Gotham was in the midst of a concurrent Negrophilia." Gershwin seized the moment and composed a one-act opera based on American themes. Set in a Harlem barroom, *Blue Monday* concerned a couple whose romance ended in violence. Reviewers dismissed the simplistic plot, but most found the music beguiling. The *New York Sun* critic had an especially clear crystal ball: "Here at last is a genuinely human plot of American life, set to music in the popular vein, using jazz only at the right moments, the sentimental song, the Blues, and above all, a new and free ragtime recitative. True, there were crudities, but in it we see the first gleam of a new American musical art."

But George was still a songwriter first and serious composer second. Even while he worked with other lyricists, he brought in his brother for occasional "singles," offering them to vaudeville and Broadway headliners. One, "The Real American Folk Song," was the first all-Gershwin number to say something about the country and its new music:

The real American folk
  song is a rag—
A mental jag—
A rhythmic tonic for the
  chronic blues,
The critics called it a joke
  song, but now
They've changed their
  tune
And they like it somehow.
For it's inoculated
With a syncopated
Sort of meter,
Sweeter
Than a classic strain . . .
The real American folk
  song—
A master stroke song—
IS A RAG!

The key to that song is the word "syncopated," indicating emphases on the unexpected beats. Traditional music, classic and pop, relies on a standard rhythm: four-four time, for example, would count off *one*, two, three, four. Syncopation, in contrast, would be one *two*, three *four*, a refreshment for the ear but hell for the

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

lyricist, especially an exacting one like Ira, who soon became known by his sobriquet: the Jeweler.

Pop diva Nora Bayes agreed to sing "Folk Song" in her revue, *Ladies First,* at the Broadhurst Theater. It was the first time Ira had ever heard one of his works performed for an audience, and he hungered for more applause.

But the brothers still had a way to go before their paths truly converged. Now that Ira had proved himself in the theater, he found himself collaborating with Vincent Youmans on a couple of undistinguished shows, while George established his reputation with half a dozen Broadway smashes, working with Caesar, De Sylva, and other wordsmiths.

Then, in 1921, the famous brother persuaded a producer to let him write with an unknown talent named Arthur Francis. George described the lyricist as "a college kid with loads of talent." The kid, of course, was Ira, who had concocted his pseudonym from the first names of his younger siblings. The team provided a study in contrasts; it was hard to believe that they shared the same parents. George was a dynamo—handsome, agile, mercurial, a smoker and chewer of cigars. Energy seemed to radiate from his fingers and eyes. A Gershwin number described him perfectly: "Oh, I Can't Sit Down!" Ira was a worrier—pudgy, contemplative, a pipe-smoking personification of another Gershwin song: "I Won't Say I Will, I Won't Say I Won't."

Their first musical, *A Dangerous Maid,* enjoyed modest success in 1921; so did *For Goodness Sake* in 1922. Neither production featured any hits; that sort of triumph would wait another two years. By then, George had established himself as America's first crossover musician, linking the raucous nightclub and the decorous concert hall in something he called *Rhapsody in Blue.* Conductor Paul Whiteman remembered the audience at Aeolian Hall on the epochal afternoon of February 12, 1924. In addition to Sergei Rachmaninoff, Victor Herbert, and Jascha Heifetz, it included "vaudevillians, concert managers come to have a look at the novelty, Tin Pan Alleyites, opera stars, flappers, all mixed up higgledy-piggledy." That motley group reflected Gershwin's rhapsody, played by the composer himself. From the first clarinet glissando to the fluent chords in the middle to the broad melodic finale, *Rhapsody in Blue* enthralled the audience. All of *haute* New York seemed caught in the skeins of George's music. It suggested the rhythms of black jazz, the melancholy strains of Yiddish folk melodies, the kinetic force of Manhattan in the Speakeasy Era, as well as the art of the Old Masters.

The crowd went wild, and even though a few critics carped at the composer's use of "colored jazz music," most were intrigued. The *New York Herald* critic was typical: "Mr. Gershwin will be heard from often, and one music lover earnestly hopes that he will keep to the field in which he is a free and independent creator, and not permit himself to be led away into the academic groves and buried in the shadows of ancient trees."

Not a chance. By the time the buzz died down, the 25-year-old was already at work on a new show with his brother. During the composition of *Lady Be Good,* produced in 1924, Arthur Francis disappeared. For the first time, a musical unabashedly presented itself as the work of George and Ira Gershwin. It starred two former vaudevillians, Fred and Adele Astaire, and contained bursts of poetry and melody that would enter the American repertoire, including the title number, "The Man I Love," and "Fascinating Rhythm." George had admired Fred's work since his vaudeville days; after watching one routine backstage he asked, "Wouldn't it be great if I could write a musical show and you could be in it?" Well, now George had written one, and Fred and his sister were its leads. Everyone who saw *Lady* knew they were at the beginning of something special—the confluence of the Astaires and the Gershwins. In the next decade, Adele would retire, but Fred would carry on. With a new partner he would lead George and Ira far up on the stairway to paradise.

Even in the Roaring Twenties, the Gershwins had a few detractors, but critics had never meant much to George. It was Ira who took them seriously, forever revising his verse, aiming for a Platonic ideal that he never quite achieved. After Ira's emergence as a major lyricist, almost all of his colleagues wrote salutes to the man's industry and exactitude. But there is a notable exception. In an ungenerous (and inaccurate) assessment, Stephen Sondheim commented, "It's rare in an Ira Gershwin lyric where you don't feel the sweat because he's shoving so many rhymes in." By contrast, *My Fair Lady* lyricist Alan Jay Lerner, who knew a thing or two about rhyme and rhythm, wrote that he was "overwhelmed by the wonderfully slangy sentimentality and ingenious versatility of Ira." Lerner's was the people's voice, too. For every Sondheim phrase that has worked its way into the common language—"send in the clowns," say—Ira Gershwin could easily provide ten: "lady be good," "nice work if you can get it," "our love is here to stay," "stairway to paradise," "someone to watch over me," " 's wonderful," "how long has this been going on?," "I got rhythm," "it ain't necessarily so," "they can't take that away from me," to name a few.

Moreover, unlike Cole Porter, Noel Coward, or Sondheim himself, Ira seldom had the luxury of writing music to accommodate his words. George's music came first, the headlong tempi demonstrating the composer's pep—today it would be called gusto on steroids. The speed of "Fascinating Rhythm," for example, made Ira hurry his verse:

Fascinating Rhythm
You've got me on the go!
Fascinating Rhythm
I'm all a-quiver!

What a mess you're making!
The neighbors want to know
Why I'm always shaking
Just like a flivver.

By the time of *Oh, Kay!* in 1926, though, George had learned to write for onstage characters. His yearning, blues-tinted melodies now began to mark the second Gershwin style, one that concerned itself with emotion *and* tempo. "Someone to Watch over Me" is typical of this period, George using a poignant, drawn-out theme, Ira matching him with the tangy assertions of a Jazz Age dreamer:

Although he may not be the man some
Girls think of as handsome,
To my heart he'll carry the key.

Won't you tell him, please,
To put on some speed,
Follow my lead?
Oh, how I need
Someone to watch over me.

Gilbert Seldes, the first American critic to take the popular arts seriously, worried that George might be going effete and highbrow with his serious concert music. In *Esquire,* he grumbled: "It is as if Gershwin were writing for the five thousand people who go to the Lido, know the best club in London, can't count above 21 in New York, and depend on [society hostess] Elsa Maxwell for a good time."

But *Oh, Kay!* put these fears to rest. Gertrude Lawrence sang the lead number, and, as the composer recalled, she had the stage to herself. "It was all very wistful, and, on opening night, somewhat to the surprise of the management, Miss Lawrence sang the song to a doll. This doll was a strange looking object I found in a Philadelphia toy store and gave to her with the suggestion that she use it in the number. The doll stayed in the show for the entire run."

Just as George's affecting new music and fascinating rhythms became his signature, the argot of the times became Ira's ID. In *Funny Face,* he stood Broadway on its ear by fracturing the word "it's" into pieces, using only the last consonant:

'S wonderful! 'S marvelous—
You should care for me!
'S awful nice! 'S Paradise—

'S what I love to see!
My dear, it's four-leaf-
clover time;
From now on my heart's
working overtime.

And in "How Long Has This Been Going On?" he turned an exclamation into the personification of a beautiful girl:

I could cry salty tears;
Where have I been all
these years?
Little wow,
Tell me now:
How long has this been
going on?

With royalties pouring in, George and Ira moved their parents and siblings to a large West Side apartment. Ira courted and wed Lenore Strunsky, but the marriage barely interrupted the brothers' collaboration. In 1929, they rented adjoining penthouses at 33 Riverside Drive, where Ira was usually content to stay at home fussing over nuances and phrases, while George was always happy to attend a party, provided that his host had a grand piano on which he could regale the guests with a medley of his melodies played *con brio.* When not committed to a show, George traveled to London and the Continent, searching out conductors and composers. Introduced to Maurice Ravel in Paris, he expressed a wish to study with the maestro. Replied Ravel, "But I was coming to America to study with you."

A probably apocryphal version of the story has George asking Stravinsky for lessons, with the Russian, mindful of Gershwin's huge income, responding, "How about you give *me* some lessons?"

At about this time, recalled playwright S. N. Behrman, George "was becoming one of the most eligible bachelors in America; there was curiosity among his friends from the beginning as to who the girl would be." There had been brief liaisons with starlets, a long-term romance with composer Kay Swift, and a serious fling with a "physical culture" teacher, whom George called the Dream Girl. In the midst of that last romance, Behrman received a call from Ira with "some devastating news. He hadn't the heart to tell George. He begged me to relieve him of this disagreeable chore. I took on the job. I went up to George's room; he was working on the *Concerto in F.* He played me a passage; he completed a variation on it.

" 'George,' I said, 'I have bad news for you. Dream Girl is married.' His brown eyes showed a flicker of pain. He kept looking at me. Finally, he spoke. 'Do you know?' he said, 'If I weren't so busy, I'd feel terrible.' "

The *Concerto,* debuting at Carnegie Hall, showed that *Rhapsody in Blue* was no fluke. George had no intention of abandoning his first love, the Broadway stage, but the ambitious composer never lost sight of his second love, the concert stage. Just when he began thinking of another, longer piece, though, a third love came along—the sound stage. Hollywood beckoned, and George and Ira went west. Their first film, *Delicious,* appeared in 1931, as the Depression settled over the land. The score was unremarkable; the movie bombed.

Other teams might have wallowed in sunshine and self-pity. The Gershwins packed up, returned to Broadway—and won the Pulitzer Prize. When George S. Kaufman observed, "Satire is something that closes on Saturday night," he obviously forgot the book he had confected for *Of Thee I Sing,* a hilarious send-up of American presidential politics. Although many of the topical numbers have dated, songs like "Who Cares?" remain evergreen:

Who cares
If the sky cares to fall in
the sea?
Who cares what banks fail
in Yonkers,
Long as you've got a kiss
that conquers,
Why should I care?
Life is one long jubilee,
So long as I care for you
And you care for me.

The penultimate line is often misquoted. Performers tend to sing "As long as I care for you." The Jeweler, ever grammatical, knew better.

In the next two years, the Gershwins came up with three new shows—in the 1930s,

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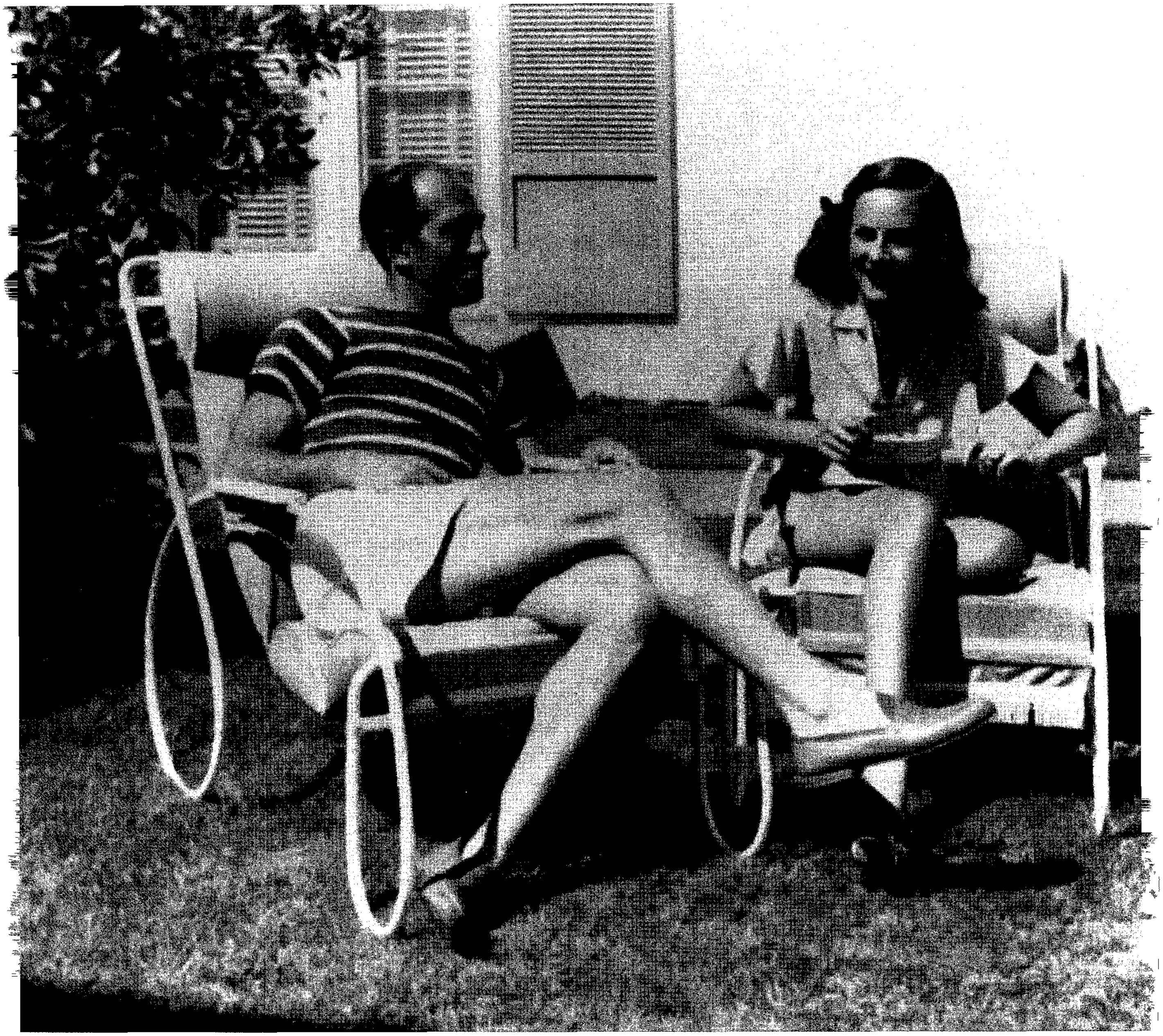


George Gershwin in Hollywood with actress Paulette Goddard, with whom he had a fling

40 musicals might open in a season—but George was restless, convinced that he could take his work to a higher plane. Back in 1926, he had read *Porgy*, a poignant novel by DuBose Heyward depicting the lives of impoverished southern blacks. Since the debut of *Blue Monday*, the composer had itched to write a full-length "folk opera" using jazz, blues, and classical themes. Set against a backdrop of African-Americana, *Porgy* seemed to

my operatic sponsor
— my friend, George —
felicitations upon Porgy.
every good wish for
future.
moment in 15 years'
association with you here's
autograph in celebration of
"Porgy and Bess"
With lo
Ira.
Bos
Sep
19

George and Ira Gershwin flank DuBose Heyward, . . .

PHOTOFEST (2)

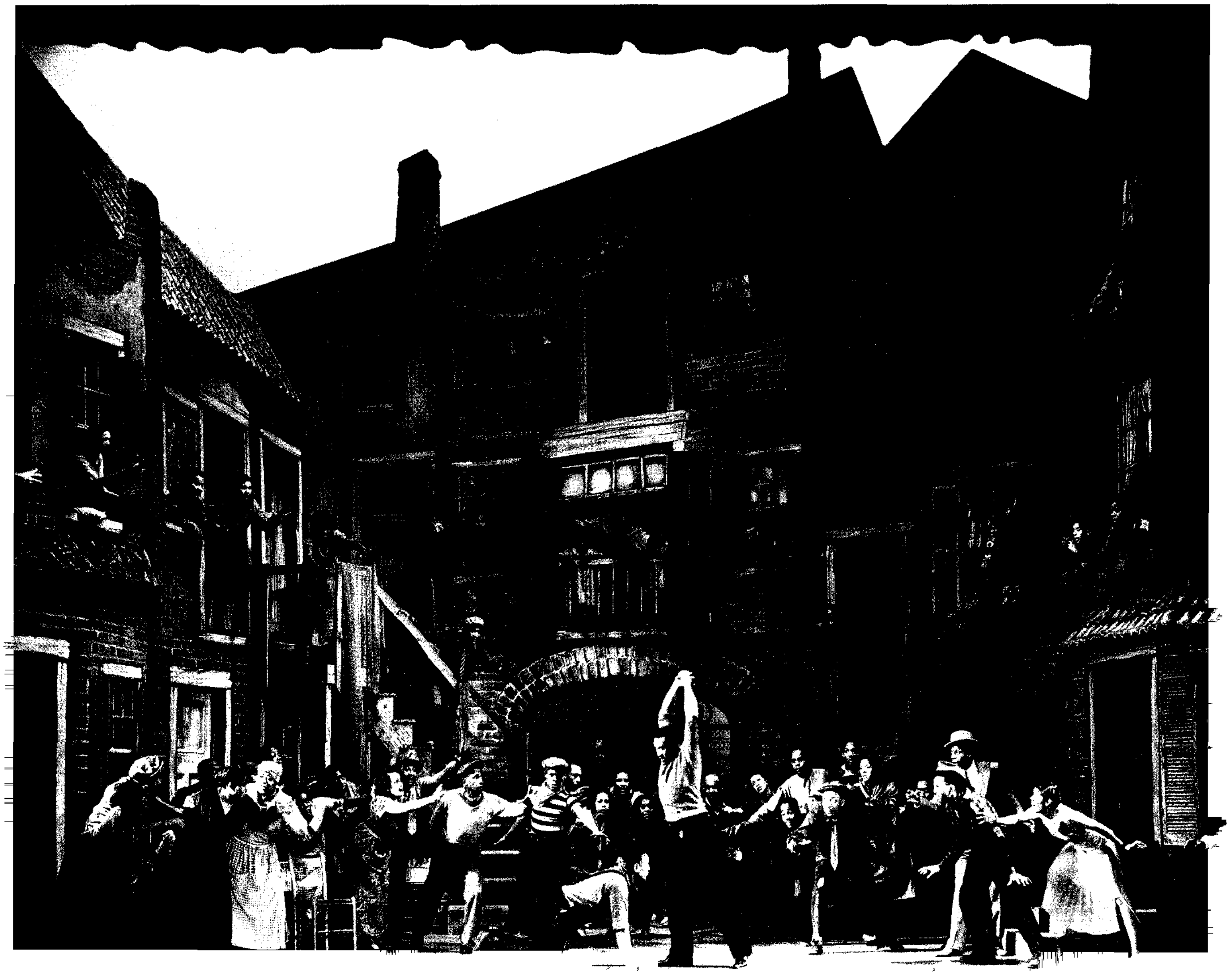
offer an ideal mix of tragedy, comedy, and ethnicity.

George anxiously arranged to meet Heyward. The novelist was not what he expected. For starters, he was a southern white aristocrat—an ancestor had signed the Declaration of Independence. Yet Heyward had known poverty intimately, after the early death of his parents, when the traumatized boy dropped out of school and went to work on the Charleston docks. There he learned about the lives and loves of black folk and determined to write about them. *Porgy* became a bestseller and put him on the map. Heyward knew of Gershwin's work, but he, too, was surprised by his soon-to-be collaborator. "My first impression remains with me and is singularly vivid," the novelist wrote. "A young man of enormous physical and emotional vitality, who possessed the faculty of seeing himself quite impersonally and realistically, and who knew exactly what he wanted and where he was going. At that time he had numerous Broadway successes to his credit, and his *Rhapsody in Blue* had placed him in the front ranks of American composers. It was extraordinary, I thought, that in view of a success that might well have dazzled any man, he could appraise his talent with such complete detachment. And so we decided then that some day when we were both prepared we would do an operatic version of my simple Negro beggar of the Charleston streets."

That day came in 1935, when DuBose, Ira, and George went to work on *Porgy and Bess.* Ira's characteristically modest notes on "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin' " are instructive. DuBose took George's melody back to Charleston after discussing the subject of the song and what the words had to convey. "Two weeks later," wrote Ira, "DuBose sent me a version that had many useable lines; many, however, looked good on paper but were awkward when sung. This is no reflection on DuBose's ability. It takes years and years of experience to know that such a note cannot take such a syllable, that many a poetic line can be unsingable, that many an ordinary line fitted into the proper musical phrase can sound like a million. So on this song I did have to do a bit of 'polishing.' All in all, I'd consider this a 50-50 collaborative effort."

Since its first run at the Alvin Theater, *Porgy and Bess* has played all over the globe, with at least a dozen revivals in New York, including one at the Metropolitan Opera. But its first run proved short-lived. Most key reviewers held the work at arm's length.

. . . whose novel was the basis of the brothers' *Porgy and Bess*, depicted below in its original 1935 production.



Composer/critic Virgil Thomson wrote that "Gershwin does not even know what an opera is"; others called *Porgy* "a hybrid" and "an aggrandized musical show." The notices kept the public away. Though the Alvin slashed ticket prices, the cast still played to half-filled houses, and after 124 performances the final curtain rang down.

Emotionally drained, the Gershwins treated themselves to separate vacations. George went to Mexico, Ira and Lenore cruised to Trinidad. They returned, says George's most scrupulous biographer, Edward Jablonski, to find that "word had begun to trickle eastward that Hollywood was interested in the Gershwins"—again. Yet the interested parties feared that George might consider himself above the cinema. George sent an assuring wire to his agent: "Rumors about highbrow music ridiculous . . . am out to write hits."

That he was. RKO assigned the Gershwins to score *Shall We Dance*, starring their old colleague Fred Astaire and his partner on six earlier pictures, Ginger Rogers. Dance critic Arlene Croce notes: "No dancers ever reached a wider public, and the stunning fact is that Astaire and Rogers, whose love scenes were their dances, became the most popular team the movies have ever known." This team embodied the Gershwin spirit—their romantic tribulations solved in upbeat numbers; their unforced sophistication gilding everything they touched; their cool, witty, wholly American good humor whisking the clouds away. Like George and Ira, they made everything seem fluent, effortless. It was the kind of ease that could only come after months of labor and attention to detail.

No wonder that practically every number was a smash. Astaire took "They All Laughed" and ran:

They all laughed at Christopher Columbus
When he said the World was round.
They all laughed when Edison recorded sound. . . .
They all said we never could be happy,
They laughed at us—and how!
But ho, ho, ho!
Who's got the last laugh now?

In his memoir, *Lyrics on Several Occasions*, Ira recalls the song's genesis. "In the Twenties not only the stock market but the self-improvement business boomed. One dance-school advertisement, for instance, featured, 'They all laughed when I sat down to play the piano.' So the phrase 'they all laughed' germinated and estivated in the back of my mind for a dozen years until the right climate and tune popped it out as a title."

"Let's Call the Whole Thing Off," with its cascade of pronunciations, became another audience favorite:

You say eether and I say eyether,
You say neether and I say nyther;
Eether, eyether, neether, nyther—
Let's call the whole thing off.

And "They Can't Take That Away from Me" entered the pantheon of cinematic love songs:

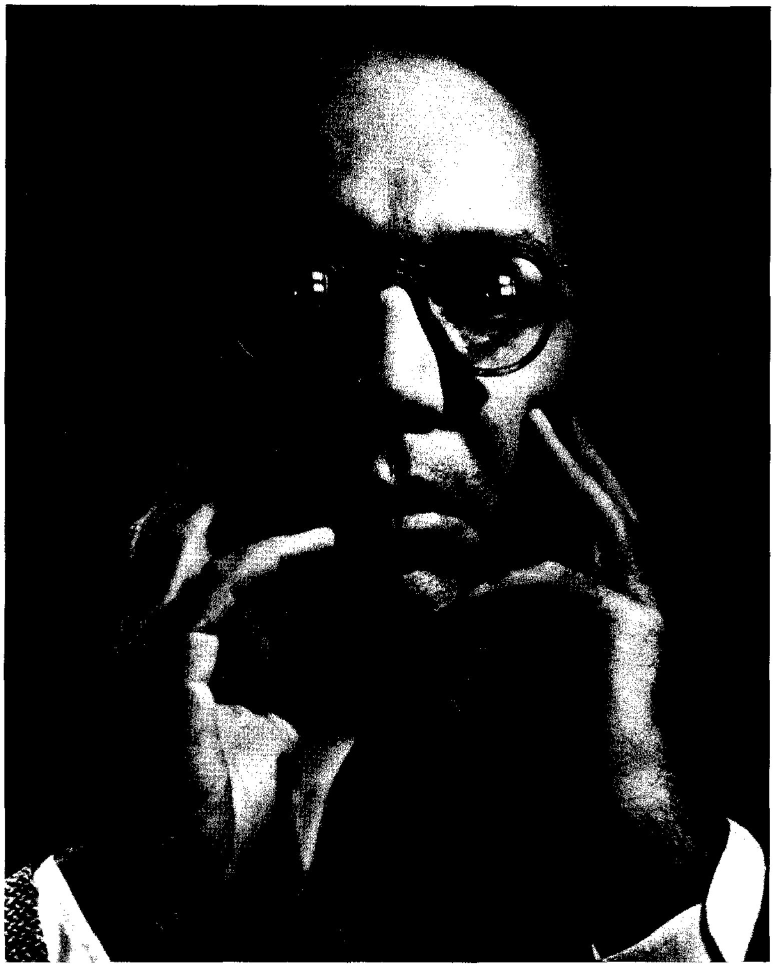
We may never, never meet again
On the bumpy road to love,
Still I'll always, always keep
The mem'ry of—

The way you hold your knife,
The way we danced 'til three,
The way you changed my life—
No, no, they can't take that away from me.

As Alec Wilder shrewdly observes in his definitive *American Popular Song*, the Depression years marked the Gershwins' greatest popularity. And since George was "rarely given to sad songs, what could have been a more welcome palliative for the natural gloom of the times than the consistently insistently cheery sound of his music?"

The incomparable Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in *Shall We Dance* (1937)

RKO RADIO PICTURES INC/PHOTOFEST


PHOTOFEST

Kurt Weill, composer of Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, worked with Ira Gershwin on *Lady in the Dark* (1941).

It went on cheering in George and Ira's next film, *A Damsel in Distress*, again starring Astaire. "A Foggy Day (in London Town)" quickly climbed the Hit Parade, and "Nice Work If You Can Get It," with its conflation of employment and romance, became a Depression anthem:

The man who lives for only making money
Lives a life that isn't necessarily sunny;
Likewise the man who works for fame—
There's no guarantee that time won't erase his name.
The fact is
The only work that really brings enjoyment
Is the kind that is for girl and boy meant.
Fall in love—you won't regret it.
That's the best work of all—if you can get it.

Holding hands at midnight
'Neath a starry sky. . . .
Nice work if you can get it,
And you can get it—if you try.

By now George had seen and heard his "serious" work—*Concerto in F*, *Variations on "I Got Rhythm," Preludes for Piano*, *An American in Paris*—performed in the major concert halls of Europe and the U.S. He had more such projects in mind, but the easy life in California quickly seduced him. He took up oil painting and tennis, and started work on yet another film. After all, he reasoned, he had plenty of time to compose longer pieces; he was only 38. For the *Goldwyn Follies*, he and Ira wrote some numbers that displeased the studio, and one song that audiences soon knew by heart:

It's very clear
Our love is here to stay
Not for a year,
But ever and a day.

The radio and the telephone
And the movies that we know
May just be passing fancies—
And in time may go.
But oh, my dear,
Our love is here to stay.
Together we're
Going a long, long way.

In time the Rockies may

crumble,
Gibraltar may tumble
(They're only made of clay),
But—our love is here to stay.

Alas, there would be no more time for anything. "Love Is Here to Stay" is the last song George Gershwin ever wrote. He had experienced memory lapses during some piano recitals, and in the spring of 1937 suffered from blinding headaches. In the early summer, his personality underwent a disturbing change. Behrman dropped in at the composer's Beverly Hills home. "It was not the George we all knew," he remembered. "He was very pale. The light had gone from his eyes. He seemed old.

"I asked him if he felt pain.

" 'Behind my eyes,' he said, and repeated it: 'behind my eyes.' I knelt beside him on the sofa and put my hand under his head. I asked if he felt like playing the piano. He shook his head. It was the first refusal I'd ever heard from him.

" 'I had to live for this,' he said, 'that Sam Goldwyn should say to me: "Why don't you write hits like Irving Berlin?" ' "

Originally dismissed as psychosomatic, the symptoms indicated a grave illness, disclosed when George took an afternoon nap on July 7 and fell into a coma. Brain specialists arrived, and operated the following day. They removed a grapefruit-size tumor, but the damage was fatal: George died on the morning of July 11. "His death seems to me the most tragic thing I have ever known," wrote George S. Kaufman. As the body went back east by rail, radio stations continually played Gershwin songs. George was buried in Westchester on a rainy July 15, after simultaneous overcrowded services at Temple Emanu-El in New York and B'nai Brith Temple in Hollywood. Earlier, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia had ordered a two-minute memorial silence, observed throughout the five boroughs. Subways stopped in their tracks, as did buses, taxis, and pedestrians. It was as if the nation wanted to freeze the clock forever. Only later could George's friends console themselves, much as A. E. Housman did with the poem "To an Athlete, Dying Young":

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Behrman's memoir is one of many restatements of that theme: "I see that George lived all his life in youth. He was 38 when he died. He was given no time for the middle years, for the era when you look back, when you reflect, when you regret. His rhythms were the pulsations of youth. He reanimated them in those much older than he was. He reanimates them still."

But for Ira, no words sufficed to express his state of mind. It was as if he had lost one of his hands. Because he remained under contract to Sam Goldwyn and because he believed in professionalism over self-indulgence, he completed the rest of the songs for the *Follies*. Vernon Duke composed the new tunes. En route, says Ira's biographer, Philip Furia, Duke "took down a melody Ira sang for a verse for 'Love Is Here to Stay' "; Ira's lyric registers his own distraught state of mind:

The more I read the papers,
The less I comprehend
The world and all its capers
And how it all will end.
Nothing seems to be lasting. . . .

The next months were a blur of melancholy. Then one day, Ira recalled, "I got to the record player and somehow found myself putting on the Fred Astaire recordings of the *Shall We Dance* score—most of which had been written in that very room less than a year before. In a few moments the room was filled with gaiety and rhythm, and I felt that George, smiling and approving, was there listening with me—and grief vanished."

Grief would return in waves, though, and three years passed before Ira went back into harness. This time it was with composer Kurt Weill, a refugee from Nazi Germany. Weill had collaborated with Bertolt Brecht during the Weimar period, composing the music for stinging cabaret operas like *The Threepenny Opera* and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. In the U.S., he found work on Broadway, writing *Knickerbocker Holiday* with Maxwell Anderson, a show that featured Weill's first American hit, "September Song." Playwright/director Moss Hart sought the composer out for a new kind of project. Having undergone psychoanalysis, Hart envisioned an unconventional demi-opera about the id, the ego, and the superego, full of dream sequences and subconscious revelations. Weill was his first choice to write the music, but who would supply the lyrics? Lorenz Hart? Drank too much. Oscar Hammerstein II? Too sentimental. What about Ira Gershwin? He fired off a telegram, explaining his idea. Ira thought about it for days, realized that he had stagnated for too long, and signed on to write the rhymes for the musical, then titled *I Am Listening*.

By the time Hart's show opened at the Colonial in 1941, it had a new title: *Lady in the Dark*. The musical focused on the tribulations of a women's magazine's neurotic editor, played by Gertrude Lawrence, and the dreams that revealed her inner conflicts. The tender ballad "My Ship" enjoyed immediate popularity; a punning song about marriage, "It's Never Too Late to Mendelssohn," announced that Ira's wit was intact, and the patter song "Tchaikowsky" made a star of an unknown, Danny Kaye, when he rattled off the names of more than 50 Russian composers in less than a minute. The final stanza always drew an ovation that lasted longer than the number itself:

There's Liadoff and Karganoff,
Markievitch, Pantschenko
And Dargomyzski, Stcherbatcheff,
Scriabine, Vassilenko,
Stravinsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff,
Mussorgsky, and Gretchaninoff
And Glazounoff and Caesar Cui,
Kalinikoff, Rachmaninoff,

Stravinsky and Gretchaninoff
Rumshinsky and Rachmaninoff,
I really have to stop, the subject has been dwelt
Upon enough!

Lady in the Dark ran for two years and became a major film vehicle for Ginger Rogers in 1944. But Ira didn't capitalize on his most recent success. For the next several years, he noted, "I did little else but read, answer letters and turn

PHOTOFEST

George Gershwin plays the piano.

Urbanities

down scripts." Moving from flat to flat in his youth, coupled with the back-and-forth of Beverly Hills to Broadway as an adult, had left its mark. Even though Ira considered himself "a New Yorker first and last," he and Lenore settled into a big house in Beverly Hills, where they would spend the rest of their lives. Hollywood seemed right for him; in 1945, MGM produced *Rhapsody in Blue,* a worshipful, inaccurate screen biography of George Gershwin. Robert Alda (Alan's father) played the composer rather listlessly, but no matter: the music was glorious, and the public ate it up. Once again, George's soaring melodies and irresistible beats filled the airwaves.

From here on, Ira would work with the "A" list of American popular composers—Harold Arlen, Jerome Kern, Burton Lane, Arthur Schwartz, Harry Warren—yet he would write for Broadway only twice more, and neither occasion turned out well. The first show, *The Firebrand of Florence*, began happily; he and Kurt Weill based it on Benvenuto Cellini's delightfully indiscreet memoirs. Many of the songs saluted Ira's idol, W. S. Gilbert:

We're soldiers of a duchy
Whose Duke is very
touchy,
Exploding on the slightest
provocation.
The ducal front we
back up,
And we're supposed to
hack up
The enemies who cause
him aggravation.
Night and day we have
to drill—
He doesn't like us
standing still.

But the public, weary of war, had already turned away from the past, toward modern sounds and contemporary thoughts. *Firebrand* closed after 43 performances. Bowing to the zeitgeist, Ira next worked with Arthur Schwartz on a "so-called 'smart' show" about divorce, with a gag-filled book by George S. Kaufman. During the Boston tryout of *Park Avenue*, a friend of Schwartz's saw the show gratis. "She cried through most of it," Ira recalled. "She had recently been divorced and just couldn't take it." Neither could the New York audience. "No-fault" divorces had yet to enter the lexicon of meaningless jargon. In those less irresponsible days, a marital split was no laughing matter, and no singing one either. The musical closed after 72 performances. "Heigh-ho," the lyricist wrote a friend, "guess I can't afford to do any more flops—two in a row is about six too many."

Ira returned to film work, composing rhymes to his brother's unpublished "trunk" music for the Ginger Rogers vehicle *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*. This, too, flopped. Ira announced his retirement. At 50, he said, he was "determined to rest."

He would break that rest several times. He collaborated with Harry Warren on *The Barkleys of Broadway*, the last film to star Astaire and Rogers. It was not easy. P. G. Wodehouse once told Ira that the greatest challenge in lyric writing was to come across a section of melody requiring three double rhymes. In "Shoes with Wings On," that was exactly what Ira encountered. "I well realized what this special torture was," he wrote, "when I tackled 'wings on.' When I finally wound up with 'wings on—strings on—things on,' I felt like a suddenly unburdened Atlas":

I give Aladdin the lamp,
Midas the gold.
Who needs a wizard or
magician
In the old tradition?
That's not competition—
I've got 'em beat by a
thousandfold!
Why?

'Cause I've got shoes with
wings on—
And living has no strings
on.
I put those magic things
on,
And I go flying with 'em
And the town is full of
rhythm
And the world's in
rhyme.

But these were minor triumphs in a career rapidly winding down. Gene Kelly's 1951 film, *An American in Paris*, with its sweet Gershwin tunes, reminded the world of how much it had lost in 1937. The melodies, at once heartbreakingly beautiful and jaunty, evoked a long-gone romantic era, a time before irony and doubt had replaced wit and feeling. It reminded Ira, too, of how lonely he had been all these years. In palmier days, he had written a British-tinged song:

Stiff upper lip! Stout fella!
When you're in a stew—
Sober or blotto,
This is your motto:
Keep muddling through!

Now he took the words seriously, muddling through as best he could, aware that the Jeweler was not much in demand.

And then, in 1954, Warner Brothers assigned him to work with Harold Arlen on the Judy Garland film *A Star Is Born*. "The Man That Got Away" came from this coupling, and with the exception of "Over the Rainbow," with Arlen's music and Yip Harburg's lyrics, no other song has ever been so identified with the singer; it became an integral part of every Garland concert. Her phrases gave desperation a human face:

The night is bitter,
The stars have lost their glitter;
The winds grow colder,
And suddenly you're older—
And all because of the man that got away.

No more his eager call,
The writing's on the wall;
The dreams you've dreamed have all
Gone astray.

Typically, Ira had a reason for the ungrammatical title—"that" instead of "who." This "had to be 'The Man That Got Away,'" he explained, "because, actually, the title hit me as a paraphrase of the angler's 'You should have seen the one that got away.' "

After *A Star Is Born* came some undistinguished efforts—*The Country Girl* in 1954; *Kiss Me, Stupid* ten years later. Between these films, Ira tended to the things that mattered most to him: editing and annotating the works of George and Ira Gershwin. In the course of his activities, he came across an unused song, "I'm a Poached Egg," for *Shall We Dance*. He set new words to it, in the style of a Cole Porter "list" song:

I'm a poached egg
Without a piece of toast,
Yorkshire pudding without a beef to roast,
A haunted house
That hasn't got a ghost—
When I'm without you.

I'm a lawyer
Who never won a case,
I'm a missile
That can't get into space,
Just a poached egg
With egg upon its face—
Each time I'm without you.

In one sense, it was just a job, a comic tune for Dean Martin to warble in a second-rate farce. In another, it was an expression of Ira's state of mind, kept from sight and sound since his brother's death.

Ira went on puttering with items in the Gershwin estate, always modest to a fault. Whenever a tribute occurred, he always seemed astonished. After a Beltway celebration of the brothers, he asked a friend, "Did you ever think you'd see the day that Ira Gershwin would be a guest of the Library of Congress?"

He died peacefully in 1983 at 85, still organizing memoirs of the past. Just how he felt about rock 'n' roll and rap, heavy metal, and the rest of the pop parade went unrecorded. But one can imagine. These are the days when the three double rhymes of rapper Chamillionaire's chant have become: "Next to the PlayStation controller/There's a full clip in my pistola/Turn a jacker into a coma." And when Bon Jovi gets standing ovations for singing, "When the world keeps trying to drag me down,/I've gotta raise my hands, gonna stand my ground./Well I say, Have a nice day." A jeweler would be out of place in this environment, on the Broadway that houses *Spamelot* and in the Hollywood that produced *The Producers*.

We are all poached eggs now.

Urbanities

The Gift of Language

Theodore Dalrymple

No, Dr. Pinker,
it's not just
from nature.

Now that I've retired early from medical practice in a slum hospital and the prison next door, my former colleagues sometimes ask me, not without a trace of anxiety, whether I think that I made the right choice or whether I miss my previous life. They are good friends and fine men, but it is only human nature not to wish unalloyed happiness to one who has chosen a path that diverges, even slightly, from one's own.

Fortunately, I do miss some aspects of my work: if I didn't, it would mean that I had not enjoyed what I did for many years and had wasted a large stretch of my life. I miss, for instance, the sudden illumination into the worldview of my patients that their replies to simple questions sometimes gave me. I still do a certain amount of medico-legal work, preparing psychiatric reports on those accused of crimes, and recently a case reminded me of how sharply a few words can bring into relief an entire attitude toward life and shed light on an entire mental hinterland.

A young woman was charged with assault, under the influence of alcohol and marijuana, on a very old lady about five times her age. Describing her childhood, the young accused mentioned that her mother had once been in trouble with the police.

"What for?" I asked.

"She was on the Social [Security] and working at the same time."

"What happened?" I asked.

"She had to give up working." The air of self-evidence with which she said this revealed a whole world of presuppositions. For her, and those around her, work was the last resort; economic dependence on state handouts was the natural condition of man.

I delighted in what my patients said. One of them always laced his statements with proverbs, which he invariably mangled. "Sometimes, doctor," he said to me one day, "I feel like the little boy with his finger in the dike, crying wolf." And I enjoyed the expressive argot of prison. The prison officers, too, had their own language. They called a loquacious prisoner "verbal" if they believed him to be mad, and "mouthy" if they believed him to be merely bad and willfully misbehaving.

Brief exchanges could so entertain me that on occasion they transformed duty into pleasure. Once I was called to the prison in the early hours to examine a man who had just tried to hang himself. He was sitting in a room with a prison officer. It was about three in the morning, the very worst time to be roused from sleep.

"The things you have to do for Umanity, sir," said the prison officer to me.

The prisoner, looking bemused, said to him, "You what?"

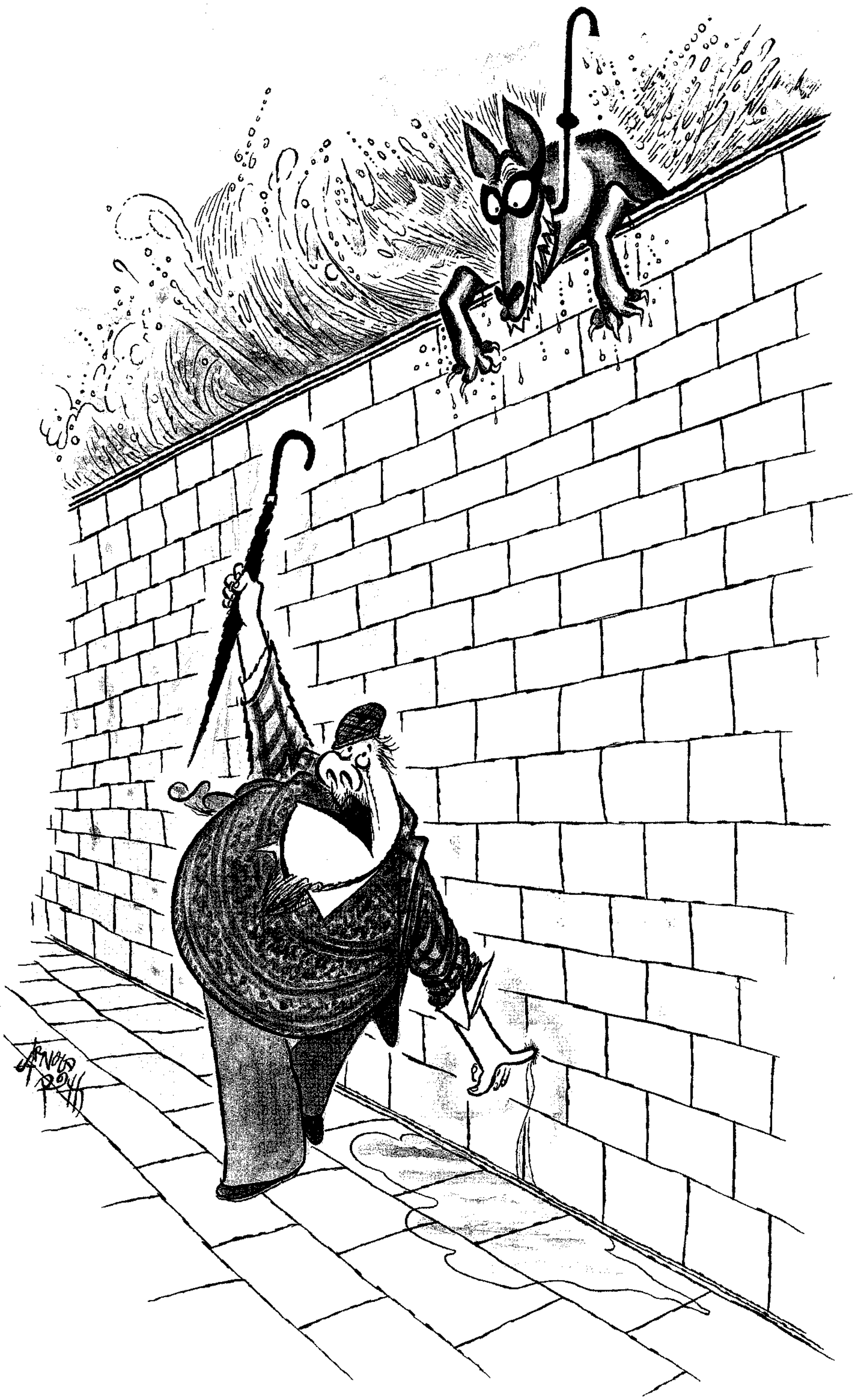
"U-manity," said the prison officer, turning to the prisoner. "You're Uman, aren't you?"

It was like living in a glorious comic passage in Dickens.

For the most part, though, I was struck not by the verbal felicity and invention of my patients and those around them but by their inability to express themselves with anything like facility: and this after 11 years of compulsory education, or (more accurately) attendance at school.

With a very limited vocabulary, it is impossible to make, or at least to express, important distinctions and to examine any question with conceptual care. My patients often had no words to describe what they were feeling, except in the crudest possible way, with expostulations, exclamations, and physical displays of emotion.

Illustrations by Arnold Roth



Often, by guesswork and my experience of other patients, I could put things into words for them, words that they grasped at eagerly. Everything was on the tip of their tongue, rarely or never reaching the stage of expression out loud. They struggled even to describe in a consecutive and logical fashion what had happened to them, at least without a great deal of prompting. Complex narrative and most abstractions were closed to them.

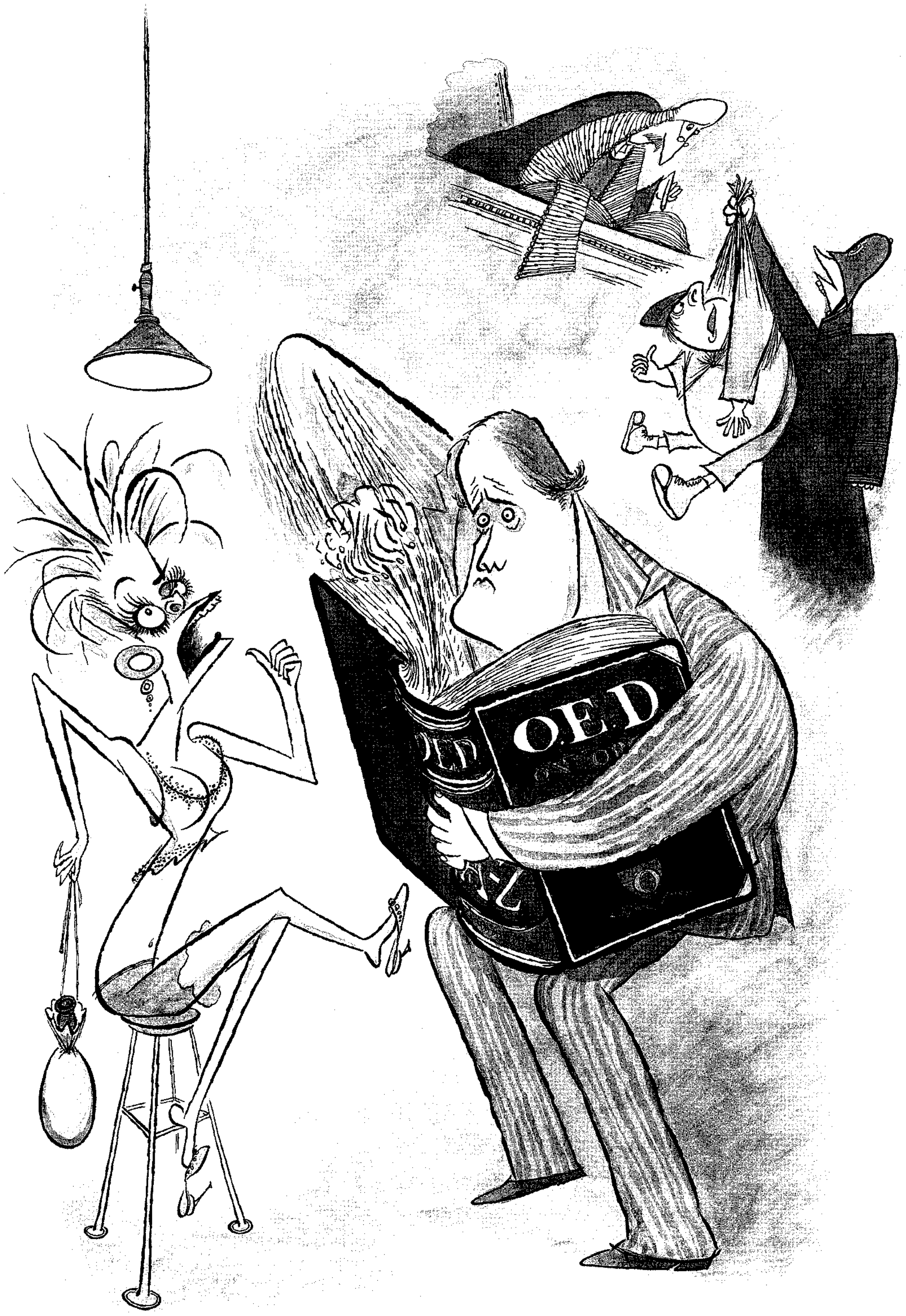
In their dealings with authority, they were at a huge disadvantage—a disaster, since so many of them depended upon various public bureaucracies for so many of their needs, from their housing and health care to their income and the education of their children. I would find myself dealing on their behalf with those bureaucracies, which were often simultaneously bullying and incompetent; and what officialdom had claimed for months or even years to be impossible suddenly, on my intervention, became possible within a week. Of course, it was not my mastery of language alone that produced this result; rather, my mastery of language signaled my capacity to make serious trouble for the bureaucrats if they did not do as I asked. I do not think it is a coincidence that the offices of all those bureaucracies were increasingly installing security barriers against the physical attacks on the staff by enraged but inarticulate dependents.

All this, it seems to me, directly contradicts our era's ruling orthodoxy about language. According to that orthodoxy, every child, save the severely brain-damaged and those with very rare genetic defects, learns his or her native language with perfect facility, adequate to his needs. He does so because the faculty of language is part of human nature, inscribed in man's physical being, as it were, and almost independent of environment. To be sure, today's language theorists concede that if a child grows up completely isolated from other human beings until the age of about six, he will never learn language adequately; but this very fact, they argue, implies that the capacity for language is "hardwired" in the human brain, to be activated only at a certain stage in each individual's development, which in turn proves that language is an inherent biological characteristic of mankind rather than a merely cultural artifact. Moreover, language itself is always rule-governed; and the rules that govern it are universally the same, when stripped of certain minor incidentals and contingencies that superficially appear important but in reality are not.

It follows that no language or dialect is superior to any other and that modes of verbal communication cannot be ranked according to complexity, expressiveness, or any other virtue. Thus, attempts to foist alleged grammatical "correctness" on native speakers of an "incorrect" dialect are nothing but the unacknowledged and oppressive exercise of social control—the means by which the elites deprive whole social classes and peoples of self-esteem and keep them in permanent subordination. If they are convinced that they can't speak their own language properly, how can they possibly feel other than unworthy, humiliated, and disenfranchised? Hence the refusal to teach formal grammar is both in accord with a correct understanding of the nature of language and is politically generous, inasmuch as it confers equal status on all forms of speech and therefore upon all speakers.

The *locus classicus* of this way of thinking, at least for laymen such as myself, is Steven Pinker's book *The Language Instinct*. A bestseller when first published in 1994, it is now in its 25th printing in the British paperback version alone, and its wide circulation suggests a broad influence on the opinions of the intelligent public. Pinker is a professor of psychology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and that institution's great prestige cloaks him, too, in the eyes of many. If Professor Pinker were not right on so important a subject, which is one to which he has devoted much study and brilliant intelligence, would he have tenure at MIT?

Pinker nails his colors to the mast at once. His book, he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says, "will not chide you about proper usage . . ." because, after all, "[l]anguage is a complex, specialized skill, which . . . is qualitatively the same in every individual. . . . Language is no more a cultural invention than is upright posture," and men are as naturally equal in their ability to express themselves as in their ability to stand on two legs. "Once you begin to look at language . . . as a biological adaptation to communicate information," Pinker continues, "it is no longer as tempting to see language as an insidious shaper of thought." Every individual has an equal linguistic capacity to formulate the most complex and refined thoughts. We all have, so to speak, the same tools for thinking. "When it comes to linguistic form," Pinker says, quoting the anthropologist, Edward Sapir, "Plato walks with the Macedonian swineherd, Confucius with the head-hunting savage of Assam." To put it another way, "linguistic genius is involved every time a child learns his or her mother tongue."

The old-fashioned and elitist idea that there is a "correct" and "incorrect" form of language no doubt explains the fact that "[l]inguists repeatedly run up against the myth that working-class people . . . speak a simpler and a coarser language. This is a pernicious illusion. . . . Trifling differences between the dialect of the mainstream and the dialect of other groups . . . are dignified as badges of 'proper grammar.'" These are, in fact, the "hobgoblins of the schoolmarm," and ipso facto contemptible. In fact, standard English is one of those languages that "is a dialect with an army and a navy." The schoolmarms he so slightingly dismisses are in fact but the linguistic arm of a colonial power—the middle class—oppressing what would otherwise be a much freer and happier populace. "Since prescriptive rules are so psychologically unnatural that only those with access to the right schooling can abide by them, they serve as shibboleths, differentiating the elite from the rabble."

Children will learn their native language adequately whatever anyone does, and the attempt to teach them language is fraught with psychological perils. For example, to "correct" the way a child speaks is potentially to give him what used to be called an inferiority complex. Moreover, when schools undertake such correction, they risk dividing the child from his parents and social milieu, for he will speak in one way and live in another, creating hostility and possibly rejection all around him. But happily, since every child is a linguistic genius, there is no need to do any such thing. Every child will have the linguistic equipment he needs, merely by virtue of growing older.

I need hardly point out that Pinker doesn't really believe anything of what he writes, at least if example is stronger evidence of belief than precept. Though artfully sown here and there with a demotic expression to prove that he is himself of the people, his own book is written, not surprisingly, in the kind of English that would please schoolmarms. I doubt very much whether it would have reached its 25th printing had he chosen to write it in the dialect of rural Louisiana, for example, or of the slums of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Even had he chosen to do so, he might have found the writing rather difficult. I should like to see him try to translate a sentence from his book that I have taken at random, "The point that the argument misses is that although natural selection involves incremental steps that enhance functioning, the enhancements do not have to be an existing module," into the language of the Glasgow or Detroit slums.

In fact, Pinker has no difficulty in ascribing greater or lesser expressive virtues to languages and dialects. In attacking the idea that there are primitive languages, he quotes the linguist Joan Bresnan, who describes English as "a West Germanic language spoken in England and its former colonies" (no prizes for guessing the emotional connotations of this way of so describing it). Bresnan wrote an article comparing the use of the dative in English and Kivunjo, a language spoken on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. Its use is much more complex in the latter language than in the former, making far more distinctions. Pinker comments: “Among the clever gadgets I have glimpsed in the grammars of so-called primitive groups, the complex Cherokee pronoun system seems especially handy. It distinguishes among ‘you and I,’ ‘another person and I,’ ‘several other people and I,’ and ‘you, one or more other persons, and I,’ which English crudely collapses into the all-purpose pronoun *we*.” In other words, crudity and subtlety are concepts that apply between languages. And if so, there can be no real reason why they cannot apply within a language—why one man’s usage should not be better, more expressive, subtler, than another’s.

Similarly, Pinker attacks the idea that the English of the ghetto, Black English Vernacular, is in any way inferior to standard English. It is rule-governed like (almost) all other language. Moreover, “If the psychologists had listened to spontaneous conversations, they would have rediscovered the commonplace fact that American black culture is highly verbal; the subculture of street youths in particular is famous in the annals of anthropology for the value placed on linguistic virtuosity.” But in appearing to endorse the idea of linguistic virtuosity, he is, whether he likes it or not, endorsing the idea of linguistic lack of virtuosity. And it surely requires very little reflection to come to the conclusion that Shakespeare had more linguistic virtuosity than, say, the average contemporary football player. Oddly enough, Pinker ends his encomium on Black English Vernacular with a schoolmarm’s pursed lips: “The highest percentage of ungrammatical sentences [are to be] found in the proceedings of learned academic conferences.”

Over and over again, Pinker stresses that children do not learn language by imitation; rather, they learn it because they are biologically predestined to do so. “Let us do away,” he writes, with what one imagines to be a rhetorical sweep of his hand, “with the folklore that parents teach their children language.” It comes as rather a surprise, then, to read the book’s dedication: “For Harry and Roslyn Pinker, who gave me language.”

Surely he cannot mean by this that they gave him language in the same sense as they gave him hemoglobin—that is to say, that they were merely the sine qua non of his biological existence as Steven Pinker. If so, why choose language of all the gifts that they gave him? Presumably, he means that they gave him the opportunity to learn standard English, even if they did not speak it themselves.

It is utterly implausible to suggest that imitation of parents (or other social contacts) has nothing whatever to do with the acquisition of language. I hesitate to mention so obvious a consideration, but Chinese parents tend to have Chinese-speaking children, and Portuguese parents Portuguese-speaking ones. I find it difficult to believe that this is entirely a coincidence and that imitation has nothing to do with it. Moreover, it is a sociological truism that children tend to speak not merely the language but the dialect of their parents.

Of course, they can escape it if they choose or need to do so: my mother, a native German-speaker, arrived in England aged 18 and learned to speak standard English without a trace of a German accent (which linguists say is a rare accomplishment) and without ever making a grammatical mistake. She didn’t imitate her parents, perhaps, but she imitated someone. After her recent death, I found her notebooks from 1939, in which she painstakingly practiced English, the errors growing fewer until there were none. I don’t think she would have been favorably impressed by Professor Pinker’s disdainful grammatical latitudinarianism—the latitudinarianism that, in British schools and universities, now extends not only to grammar but to spelling, as a friend of mine discovered recently.

A teacher in a state school gave his daughter a list of spellings to learn as homework, and my friend noticed that three out of ten of them were wrong. He went to the principal to complain, but she looked at the list and asked, “So what? You can tell what the words are supposed to mean.” The test for her was not whether the spellings were correct but whether they were understandable. So much for the hobgoblins of contemporary schoolmarms.

The contrast between a felt and lived reality—in this case, Pinker's need to speak and write standard English because of its superior ability to express complex ideas—and the denial of it, perhaps in order to assert something original and striking, is characteristic of an intellectual climate in which the destruction of moral and social distinctions is proof of the very best intentions.

Pinker's grammatical latitudinarianism, when educationists like the principal of my friend's daughter's school take it seriously, has the practical effect of encouraging those born in the lower reaches of society to remain there, to enclose them in the mental world of their particular milieu. Of course, this is perfectly all right if you also believe that all stations in life are equally good and desirable and that there is nothing to be said for articulate reflection upon human existence. In other words, grammatical latitudinarianism is the natural ideological ally of moral and cultural relativism.

It so happens that I observed the importance of mastering standard, schoolmarmly grammatical speech in my own family. My father, born two years after his older brother, had the opportunity, denied his older brother for reasons of poverty, to continue his education. Accordingly, my father learned to speak and write standard English, and I never heard him utter a single word that betrayed his origins. He could discourse philosophically without difficulty; I sometimes wished he had been a little less fluent.

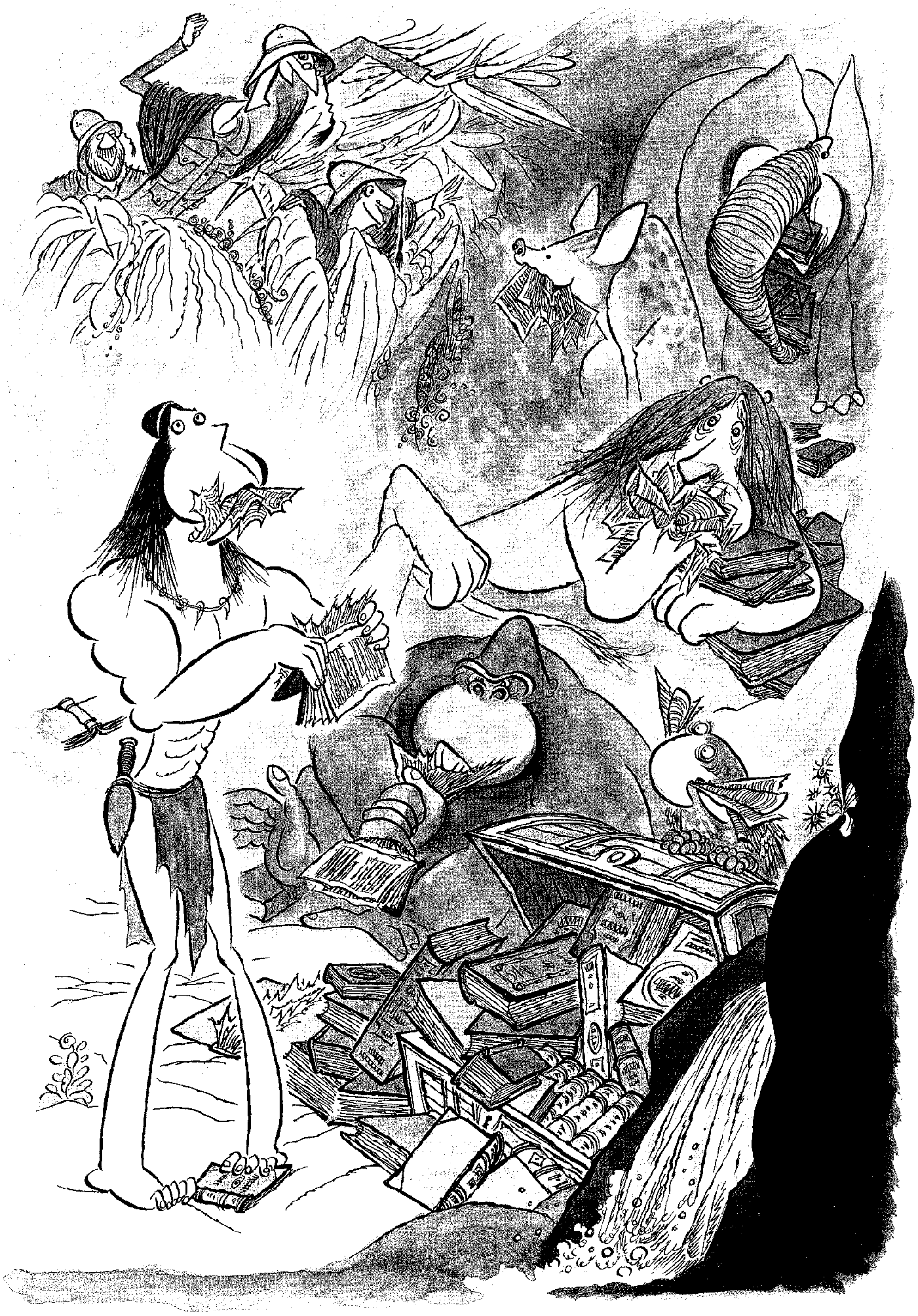
My uncle, by contrast, remained trapped in the language of the slums. He was a highly intelligent man and what is more a very good one: he was one of those rare men, much less common than their opposite, from whom goodness radiated almost as a physical quality. No one ever met him without sensing his goodness of heart, his generosity of spirit.

But he was deeply inarticulate. His thoughts were too complex for the words and the syntax available to him. All through my childhood and beyond, I saw him struggle, like a man wrestling with an invisible boa constrictor, to express his far from foolish thoughts—thoughts of a complexity that my father expressed effortlessly. The frustration was evident on his face, though he never blamed anyone else for it. When, in Pinker's book, I read the transcript of an interview by the neuropsychologist Howard Gardner with a man who suffered from expressive dysphasia after a stroke—that is to say, an inability to articulate thoughts in language—I was, with great sadness, reminded of my uncle. Gardner asked the man about his job before he had a stroke.

> "I'm a sig . . . no . . . man . . . uh, well, . . . again." These words were emitted slowly, and with great effort. . . .
>
> "Let me help you," I interjected. "You were a signal . . ."
>
> "A sig-nal man . . . right," [he] completed my phrase triumphantly.
>
> "Were you in the Coast Guard?"
>
> "No, er, yes, yes . . . ship . . . Massachu . . . chusetts . . . Coast-guard . . . years."

It seemed to me that it was a cruel fate for such a man as my uncle not to have been taught the standard English that came to come so naturally to my father. As Montaigne tells us, there is no torture greater than that of a man who is unable to express what is in his soul.

Beginning in the 1950s, Basil Bernstein, a London University researcher, demonstrated the difference between the speech of middle- and working-class children, controlling for whatever it is that IQ measures. Working-class speech, tethered closely to the here and now, lacked the very aspects of standard English needed to express abstract or general ideas and to place personal experience in temporal or any other perspective. Thus, unless Pinker's despised schoolmarms were to take the working-class children in



hand and deliberately teach them another speech code, they were doomed to remain where they were, at the bottom of a society that was itself much the poorer for not taking full advantage of their abilities, and that indeed would pay a steep penalty for not doing so. An intelligent man who can make no constructive use of his intelligence is likely to make a destructive, and self-destructive, use of it.

If anyone doubts that inarticulacy can be a problem, I recommend reading a report by the Joseph Rowntree Trust about British girls who get themselves pregnant in their teens (and sometimes their early teens) as an answer to their existential problems. The report is not in the least concerned with the linguistic deficiencies of these girls, but they are evident in the transcript in every reply to every question. Without exception, the girls had had a very painful experience of life and therefore much to express from hearts that must have been bursting. I give only one example, but it is representative. A girl, aged 17, explains why it is wonderful to have a baby:

> Maybe it's just—yeah, because maybe just—might be (um) it just feels great when—when like, you've got a child who just—you know—following you around, telling you they love you and I think that's—it's quite selfish, but that's one of the reasons why I became a mum because I wanted someone who'll—you know—love 'em to bits 'cos it's not just your child who's the centre of your world, and that feels great as well, so I think—it's brilliant. It is fantastic because—you know—they're—the child's dependent on you and you know that (um)—that you—if you—you know—you've gotta do everything for the child and it just feels great to be depended on.

As I know from the experience of my patients, there is no reason to expect her powers of expression to increase spontaneously with age. Any complex abstractions that enter her mind will remain inchoate, almost a nuisance, like a fly buzzing in a bottle that it cannot escape. Her experience is opaque even to herself, a mere jumble from which it will be difficult or impossible to learn because, for linguistic reasons, she cannot put it into any kind of perspective or coherent order.

I am not of the ungenerous and empirically mistaken party that writes off such people as inherently incapable of anything better or as already having achieved so much that it is unnecessary to demand anything else of them, on the grounds that they naturally have more in common with Shakespeare than with speechless animal creation. Nor, of course, would I want everyone to speak all the time in Johnsonian or Gibbonian periods. Not only would it be intolerably tedious, but much linguistic wealth would vanish. But everyone ought to have the opportunity to transcend the limitations of his linguistic environment, if it is a restricted one—which means that he ought to meet a few schoolmarms in his childhood. Everyone, save the handicapped, learns to run without being taught; but no child runs 100 yards in nine seconds, or even 15 seconds, without training. It is fatuous to expect that the most complex of human faculties, language, requires no special training to develop it to its highest possible power. ▫

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The Trash Princess

Kay S. Hymowitz

Why Americans love to hate Paris Hilton

Maybe 500 channels and an epidemic of bloggerhea mean that Americans have less of a common culture, but we all still share . . . Paris Hilton. The naughty blond heiress is, like, wallpapering our brains. Even if you don't read the tabloids, you can't escape her. There's a (topless) *Vanity Fair* cover, a Barbara Walters interview, a best-selling single, a CD, a jewelry line, a best-selling book, a nightclub chain. Madame Tussaud has immortalized her in its wax museum. She can command $100,000 just to show up at a restaurant or club opening for an hour. She is among the top Googled people in the United States. And don't think you can just get on a plane, go to (say) Auckland, and live Paris-free. In 2005, she was among the most popular search topics in New Zealand—not to mention Germany, Japan, and Australia. She is also a huge lure in Mexico, Turkey, France, and Sweden (so much for the enlightened sexuality of the Scandinavians). Who could top her in the fame department? Liberal commentators have dubbed estate-tax repeal "the Paris Hilton tax cut," and the term has stuck. Madonna never had a piece of federal legislation named after *her*.

Now despite her fame and good fortune, for most sentient adults Hilton personifies the decadence of our cultural moment. With her nightclub brawls, her endless sexcapades, her vapid interviews, her rodent-like dog, and her lack of ostensible talent, she reeks of every vice ever ascribed to our poor country. She has become a synonym for American materialism, bad manners, greed, "like" and "whatever" Valley Girl inarticulateness, parochialism, arrogance, promiscuity, antifeminism, exposed roots and navels, entitlement, cell-phone addiction, anorexia and bulimia, predilection for gas-guzzling private transportation, pornified womanhood, exhibitionism, narcissism—you name it.

Paris deserves almost all of this. You don't need to share Osama bin Laden's view of America to see that Paris mirrors us at our contemporary worst. But something still doesn't compute: Why, if Paris says so much about us, do Americans—not just college professors and the commentariat but celebrity watchers and tabloid junkies—hate her so much? And why, if she is so offensive, is she so ubiquitous?

Well, hating Paris Hilton is fun: Americans always enjoy a good sneer at the undeserving and decadent rich. Paris Hilton is our communal dartboard; skewering her gives the American public a chance to reaffirm who we are.

But first, a brief outline of La Hilton's life and . . . well, career, for lack of a better term. Paris, the oldest of four, was born in 1981 to Kathy and Rick Hilton, grandson of Conrad, the hotel magnate. She grew up stinking rich, mostly in Los Angeles, until 1999, when the clan settled in the family-owned Waldorf-Astoria in New York. Paris wasn't much of a student, to use an old cliché, and she dropped out of the Dwight School (sometimes said to stand for Dumb White Idiots Getting High Together). It is generally believed that she eventually got her GED, and, of course, that is entirely possible; but the truth is that Paris was spending most of her time with her younger sister Nicky, first crashing society events at the Waldorf and then, as they advanced into their older teens, getting high at clubs with similarly fortuned friends, while having their pictures taken for *Vanity Fair* and "Page Six."

Still, by the time she was 19 or so, though her life was full, it was time for young Paris to find a meaningful vocation. An animal lover, she had always wanted to be a vet; to this day, she has a menagerie of dogs, ferrets, monkeys, frogs, and fish. But to become a vet, you probably have to, you know, lose the manicures. What to do?

It's hard to know whether the answer came in a sudden, blinding flash or whether it only dawned gradually on the soul-searching Paris. Her vocation would be *her*: she would find fame and fortune *just by being Paris Hilton*. Her life was enviable, she knew, with its luxury cars and penthouses, hot-ticket events sparkling with movie stars and Yves Saint Laurent dresses, private-jet trips to Saint-Tropez, no-limit credit cards, and nonstop parties. She was living a fairy tale that could make us ordinary schlubs pant with desire. With the help of a hair colorist to turn her from ordinary blondish to starlet platinum, a plastic surgeon, a contact-lens tinter, and, most of all, a procession of high-end publicists, the pretty-enough Paris could turn herself into a princess and make her life seem even more irresistible. The sweating proles wouldn't be able to resist!

As it happened, Paris was lucky not just in picking her great-grandfather but in choosing the timing for her launch. Just then, rags like *Us Weekly*, which gained traction in 2002 under the editorship of trash-loving Bonnie Fuller, and cable networks like E! were stoking the country's insatiable appetite for tabloid gossip. These new outlets needed material, especially fashionable, alluring pictures, which Paris, with her elegantly long torso and luminous complexion, could provide with ease. Camera lust was in her DNA. Paris may have been old money on her father's side, but her mother was pure Hollywood B list. Kathy Hilton's sisters had both been popular child stars, and she herself had appeared in several television series in the 1970s. Paris often recounts a conversation she had with her maternal grandmother when she was 15: "You're my Marilyn Monroe. You're my Grace Kelly. You're going to be the most famous woman in the world," the older woman told her; indeed, her childhood nickname was "Star." And so, the perfect melding of Park Avenue and Hollywood, and at the ideal *Us Weekly* moment, Paris Hilton set about turning herself into "Paris Hilton."

By 2002, Paris had met most of fame's requirements—modeling revealing clothes, appearing in movies like *Zoolander* and *The Cat in the Hat*, and bedding well-known men, which, in her case, included Leonardo DiCaprio and various overpaid athletes. But everyone, especially Paris, knows that to become famous in America you have to be on TV. In 2003, she was able to check that off her to-do list when she landed a reality series called *The Simple Life*, a clever but hardly Nielsen-shaking concept that would have Paris and a wealthy friend sample life in rural Arkansas.

But then: kismet! A few months before her television series was to air, The Tape hit the Internet. It revealed Paris, 19 when it was made, in various states of undress and engaged in a Kama Sutra of sexual acts with Rick Solomon, an entrepreneur and her boyfriend at the time, and it temporarily silenced cynics who claimed she had no talent. Websites that merely mentioned the video, titled *One Night in Paris*, crashed. In office cubicles, workers ignored their spreadsheets and desperately tried to track down clips of naked Paris; an industrious scholar could probably locate a blip in worker productivity the exact week the video hit the Web. So big was the impact of The Tape that it changed the dynamics of celebrity making and turned Paris into the first New Media superstar. While "Page Six" and *Vanity Fair* helped to give her fame, it was the Internet, with some help from cable television and tabloid magazines, that launched her into the celebrity stratosphere.

Paris began earning money like a rap star. *The Simple Life* was a hit, as is her top-selling single and her CD called *Paris* on her own record label, Heiress Records. (It's not clear that she'll be touring, though, since she evidently cannot "sing live," as the euphemism has it.) She sells a jewelry line on Amazon; a clothing collection will debut soon. For a reported $700,000, she is putting her name on a chain of nightclubs; the first Club Paris, opened in Orlando this spring, was an

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instant sensation. The owner of the club, which also sells Paris logo'd tank tops, thongs, hats, and men's briefs, was breathless: "Anything she touches is big. The marketing is unbelievable." Though Paris isn't known for sparkling conversation, she does frequently coo, "That's hot," so in October 2004 she trademarked the phrase. You can just imagine the marketing possibilities, from the predictable underwear to (send me royalties at *City Journal*) barbecue aprons and oven mitts. Last year, Paris earned $6.5 million.

Many more millions are likely to follow. Paris is not like other celebrities, whose scandals leave them drowning their sorrows in smoky dives. The lesson of The Tape continues to hold: the worse she behaves, the more famous she becomes and the more money she makes. An arrest for drunken driving? Embarrassing photos and gossip from her lost cell phone all over the Web? A $10 million slander suit brought by jewelry heiress and romantic rival Zeta Graff? A video of her stealing a copy of her sex tape from a West Hollywood newsstand? Bring them ON! They mean more headlines, more paparazzi, more *Paris*. At this moment, Paris Hilton may be the most famous woman in the world, God help us.

People who write and think about our intense attraction to the famous often say that when we worship celebrities, we are following a Darwinian urge to revere beauty or preeminence. Paris Hilton attracts our interest much the way Arnold Schwarzenegger does, according to this view: they are alphas, creatures that have made it to the top of the pack, and we can't help but gaze at them with fascination. Paris certainly knows how to show off her considerable evolutionary advantages to the camera, where it matters most these days; she adroitly tilts her perfectly styled head like that, angles her sweetheart chin just so, arches her long, lean back *comme ça*, and gives that sideways, heavy-lidded, come-hither look (now known as a Come Fuck Me) that has bewitched fans since the days of *Silver Screen*.

But the evolutionary theory of celebrity does not begin to explain Paris Hilton mania for one reason: people hate the woman. She must be the most powerful snark magnet in history. Sure, she has her adoring fans. Why else would we have ParisHilton.com, Parisfan.com, Parishiltononline, and others like them? A lot of people really think she's hot and love to look at her. And there are those—many of them very young, alas—who actually believe her fairy tale. After all, *someone* is buying Paris Hilton perfumes and jewelry.

Still, to check out the megabytes of commentary that follow Paris's every embarrassing move is to be struck by a loathing that confutes the Darwinian explanation. Cries of "nonentity," "rich white trash," "no-talent," "brainless hussy," and "hotel heirhead" echo throughout cyberspace. Politically incorrect slurs like "tramp," "tart," "slut," "skank," and "skanktron" have suddenly become acceptable again, as long as Paris is their target. But that's just the everyday bile. Hilton hatred has been muse to striking bouts of creativity from the popular press. In the 1930s, Walter Winchell coined the term "celebutante" to describe Brenda Frazier, a socialite famous enough to make the cover of *Life* and Paris Hilton's closest sociological ancestor; well, in the spirit of Winchell, the *New York Post*'s "Page Six" has anointed Paris "celebutard." Not to be outdone, the online gossip 'zine *Defamer* ventured "celebutante vaginalist."

And that's only prologue for the epic of vitriol aimed at the heiress. She's earned the title "Worst-Dressed Celebrity" from the popular fashion critic Mr. Blackwell. The 2007 *Guinness Book of World Records* will reportedly call her the world's most overrated celebrity. A *Jane* magazine survey cited her as one of the top people whom readers would "like to see on Cottonelle" toilet paper. Young people with pages on the Internet site MySpace frequently include her in their list of "Things I Don't Like." Even people who earn a living in what journalist Maureen Orth has called "the celebrity-industrial complex" love to engage in Paris mockery. "Even a gossip columnist has limits," Lloyd Grove wrote last year in the *Daily News*. "Over the past five years—without any discernible talent, education, scruples, manners, modesty, or underpants—[Paris Hilton] . . . has waged a terrifying campaign for world domination. . . . I'm through with her. . . . We're a better country than that. *Iraq* is a better country than that."

Still, the reason for this bile goes even deeper than Grove's accurate indictment. What drives Americans crazy about Paris is what has incensed Americans since before the Revolution: her haughty air of highborn privilege. She is our Marie Antoinette: "I'm the closest thing to American royalty," Paris explained when she wrote to Prince Charles to ask for permission to use Westminster Abbey or Windsor Castle for her wedding to her soon-to-be ex-fiancé. We Americans, uncomfortable with inherited wealth and power, just don't cotton to that sense of entitlement.

Paris's presumption comes off as especially obnoxious in this hard-nosed, meritocratic age. Who is she to flaunt her easy privilege, her mindless entitlement, her careless idleness? One reason her "celebutard" IQ grates on us so much—"Could anyone be this stupid?" *Newsweek* asked in its review of *The Simple Life*—is that it comes at a time when we believe brains, or at least Ivy League degrees, are a necessary precondition for legitimate success. The panic over fancy diplomas dominates domestic life for many Americans and seems to spare almost no one, even the sons and daughters of the very rich. Evidently Paris didn't have the gray matter to do what so many of our country's young heiresses do these days: that is, go to Brown. We might excuse her if she had.

In fact, Paris violates all of the unspoken rules for the born-rich in our democratic republic. Grandes dames of yesterday, such as Brooke Astor, might be idle, but they had the virtue of reminding us of a lost world of tradition, breeding, high culture, and *noblesse oblige* philanthropy. Paris wouldn't know Astor old-school manners if she tripped over them in her gold stilettos. She is a trash princess, as vulgar as Bart Simpson and dressed in T-shirts that say "Got Blow?," tacky, Pepto-Bismol pink hoodies and matching shoes, and underwear that she notoriously neglects to wear under. Unlike reticent Park Avenue bluebloods, she is deeply exhibitionistic. Though she cried foul when The Tape was released, who could take her outrage seriously? After all, during "lovemaking," to use another of the euphemisms Paris's life seems to collect, she wrestled Rick Solomon to the side to make sure the camera was Paris-centered. At least in the past, the upper classes kept their unconventional predilections quiet, with whips and handcuffs stowed discreetly in the closet. Paris, by contrast, makes a career out of scaring the horses.

ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

That expressive look

To get a sense of the decline that Paris represents, consider great-grandpa Conrad Hilton, founder of the hotel empire. Conrad lived up to his class's reputation for randiness. He was married three times, including to actress Zsa Zsa Gabor (who, erudite trivia mavens might want to know, claimed that she lost her virginity at 15 to Kemal Atatürk, first president of the Republic of Turkey and reformer of his nation's practice of Islam). But Conrad also had principles. He was an industrious, self-made millionaire, who, having struggled to make his own fortune, didn't much care for the idea of turning his offspring into trust-fund kids. He was also a devoted, though obviously flawed, Catholic. Accordingly, and to the dismay of his potential heirs, he left the vast bulk of his fortune to the Catholic Sisters. It was only through the energetic legal maneuvering of his son Barron that the Hilton progeny got their mitts on Conrad's money.

What would Hilton Sr. make of the vulgarity of present-day Hiltons? As if Paris weren't bad enough, her parents also make a mockery of Conrad's industriousness and self-discipline. Following the success of the first season of *The Simple Life*, Rick and Kathy Hilton produced and starred in a takeoff on the hit game show *I Want to Be a Millionaire!* called *I Want to Be a Hilton!*, shamelessly flaunting the lucky accident of their birth that the Hilton patriarch had tried to annul. ("These people are idiots," viewers ranted about the Hiltons on the show's message board. "It's like the Addams family, in pink.") Surely old Conrad would not be amused by such flaunting—or by the irony that Paris buys her stripper wardrobe and sleazy nightlife with money meant for the nuns.

Paris's failure to observe the rules of trust-fund decorum, a concession to the awkward status of patricians in a country that believes in self-made success, explains the surprising tsk-tsking about her sex life. After all, these days even suburban housewives go to pole-dancing classes and devour Internet porn. But in branding Paris a "slut" or "skank," or in cackling when Cher's son accuses her of giving him an STD, we distinguish between middle-class women's "empowerment" and the sexual depravity traditionally associated with the haute monde. A 2005 ad for Carl's Jr. Burgers, in which Paris appears to be performing a sex act involving a hamburger and a Bentley, and for which she was reportedly paid $400,000, brought howls of disgust. One of her most outraged critics was *Desperate Housewives* star Nicolette Sheridan, who herself once starred in an ad that featured a wardrobe malfunction second in fame only to Janet Jackson's. In the ad, the camera shows Sheridan's back as she faces football star Terell Owens, when she drops the towel that was hiding her naked body. Yet perhaps because she sees herself as a hardworking actress, unlike the patrician Paris, and because, despite the cynicism of our times, she still expects dignity from someone with a name like Hilton, Sheridan professed shock at the burger caper. "Tacky, . . . classless," the towel-dropper huffed.

But Sheridan is onto something. Paris is exhibitionistic in a way that goes beyond the everyday sluts and hos of contemporary popular culture. When Janet Jackson arranges a wardrobe malfunction, we may rue the decay of prime-time television, we may boycott her albums or send angry letters to the FCC, but we recognize that we have seen a performance—a publicity-ravenous, cheesy performance, but a performance nonetheless. Paris, on the other hand, trumpets her name-your-pleasure promiscuity in a way that speaks only of unthinking, careless decadence. It's not that she is a working girl willing to go too far to sell her next record album; it's that she is above morality. She can do whatever she wants, and she's proud to rub your nose in that fact day after day. How could you not hate someone who thinks she doesn't have to live in the same world as the rest of us?

And so rather than being an alpha female, as theorists of celebrity would have it, Paris is America's national cartoon heroine, a caricature who allows us to mock the undeserving and decadent rich we have scorned since the time of Tom Paine. We follow the Perils of Paris the Heiress in new episodes that seem to come almost weekly, snickering at her vapidity, her coarseness, her libertinism, and her outrageous assumption of entitlement. In a recent episode, Paris goes to a just-opened, ultrahip New York club, where the bouncer, instructed not to admit "the likes of Paris Hilton and her ilk," refuses to let her in. In the last frame of the little narrative, Paris cries in her friend's arms as she wonders why everyone is "so mean" to her.

In an earlier installment, Paris goes shopping and buys $10,000 worth of Christian Dior shoes, purses, and sunglasses for her mother for Mother's Day. A deliveryman leaves them at the gate of the Hiltons' L.A. mansion, from whence, unsurprisingly, they disappear. Later that night, Paris tries to drown her sorrows at a nightclub, when she catches sight of her former friend Lindsay (Lohan, that is, a starlet whose recent antics threaten to usurp Paris's title as America's Slut in Chief). Hilton's drunken companion, oil heir Brandon Davis, screams at Lindsay that she is a "firecrotch" and goes on to describe Lindsay's said body part in unflattering terms. The last frame shows Paris laughing uproariously. In the most recent episode of Paris the Heiress, our heroine goes to a charity benefit at L.A.'s Dragonfly, another supercool club, drinks a margarita on an empty stomach, gets into her Mercedes and drives to In-N-Out (snicker) Burger, and gets stopped and handcuffed (snicker) by the police. Later, her publicist explains: "She is a big fan of fast food." She would be.

The only thing complicating this picture of dissipation is that Paris Hilton isn't quite the airhead she plays on TV. She created her persona of Paris the Heiress with an instinct for America's suspicion of the idle rich. *Confession of an Heiress: A Tongue-in-Chic Peek Behind the Pose* is the title of her best-selling book. It's the title of a woman who is in on the joke.

For example, in *The Simple Life,* her television series whose fifth season will air in 2007, she knowingly goofs on the immense gap between her life of privilege and the daily grind of ordinary folks. In the series' first and best season, Paris, playing herself, moves in with a family in Arkansas, along with her similarly trust-funded friend Nicole Richie. The show is one long, self-conscious gag about the sloth and ignorance of the very rich. Paris and Nicole refuse to prepare the slaughtered chickens for dinner, because they don't pluck anything "except eyebrows." Told to herd the cows to the barn, Nicole screams, "Move, motherfuckers, move!"

In contrast to Paris and Nicole, the Arkansas folks are hardworking and decent. The couple with whom Paris and Nicole live warns the girls when they are leaving for their new job at a dairy farm that they are representing their own families, too, and their actions will reflect on them all, a hilariously underhanded jibe at Ma and Pa Hilton. Of course, the girls are destined to embarrass themselves and everyone connected to them. "I'm not sure exactly what it is that y'all are looking for in life," the farmer says later, after firing them for napping on the job, "but I hope you find it." *The Simple Life* may be simple, but it is not stupid. And neither is its star.

Still, Paris is profoundly unwise. She did something even worse than fail at high school or shred the traditional rules of her tribe. She—and this isn't just metaphorical—sold her soul. Celebrities crave the spotlight, but in an age of mass media they still have to find a way to carve out a private life away from the grasping fans and intrusive cameras. The tabloid press and the Internet, where any individual can post a picture of Tom Cruise eating lunch with a friend or a story about seeing Sarah Jessica Parker with her son within minutes of the events, have made this task that much harder.

Part of the job definition of the publicist, in addition to increasing his clients' fame, is to manage celebrity so that megastars can keep a piece of themselves for themselves. Paris Hilton said to hell with her private self. She erased the boundary between her life and her career and turned her entire existence into a public story and herself into a "brand," as she has put it. She deliberately and programmatically offered herself up to us as an "It," a being without an inner life, a personality whose only value is to be seen and known by all. She is, in other words, the total incarnation of postmodern identity, the individual who has disappeared completely—and happily—into her image.

Paris Hilton may be a composite of contemporary American sins, but hating Paris Hilton is another thing entirely. It's a sign of lingering cultural sanity.

Oh, to England

What Makes Doctor Johnson Great?

Theodore Dalrymple

His character illuminates every word he wrote.

A friend of mine, Russian by birth but English by adoption, who speaks English more elegantly and eloquently than most native speakers, once asked me of what, precisely, the greatness of Doctor Johnson consisted. He was asking only for information, in a spirit of inquiry; but the question took me aback, because the greatness of Doctor Johnson was something that I took for granted. If my friend had asked me to name a man whose greatness was his most salient characteristic, I think I would have named Doctor Johnson without a second thought.

"But," my friend continued, "Doctor Johnson was a writer, and the greatness of writers is in their writing. Who reads him now, or feels the need to do so?" He added that he had never read him but still considered himself well-read in English literature.

Johnson's quality of unreadness is not new and is equaled only by that of Walter Scott, whose once-famous historical romances are now read, I suspect, only rarely, and with a sinking heart and a sense of duty—even though *Ivanhoe* is allegedly Prime Minister Blair's favorite reading. Carlyle, in his essay on Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, says that the *Life* far exceeds in value anything Johnson wrote: "[A]lready, indeed," says Carlyle, "[Johnson's works] are becoming obsolete in this generation; and for some future generations may be valuable chiefly as Prolegomena and expository Scholia to this Johnsoniad of Boswell." This was written in 1832, less than half a century after Johnson's death, and as literary prophecy was not far from the mark. Boswell has many more readers than Johnson, and probably has had ever since Carlyle passed judgment.

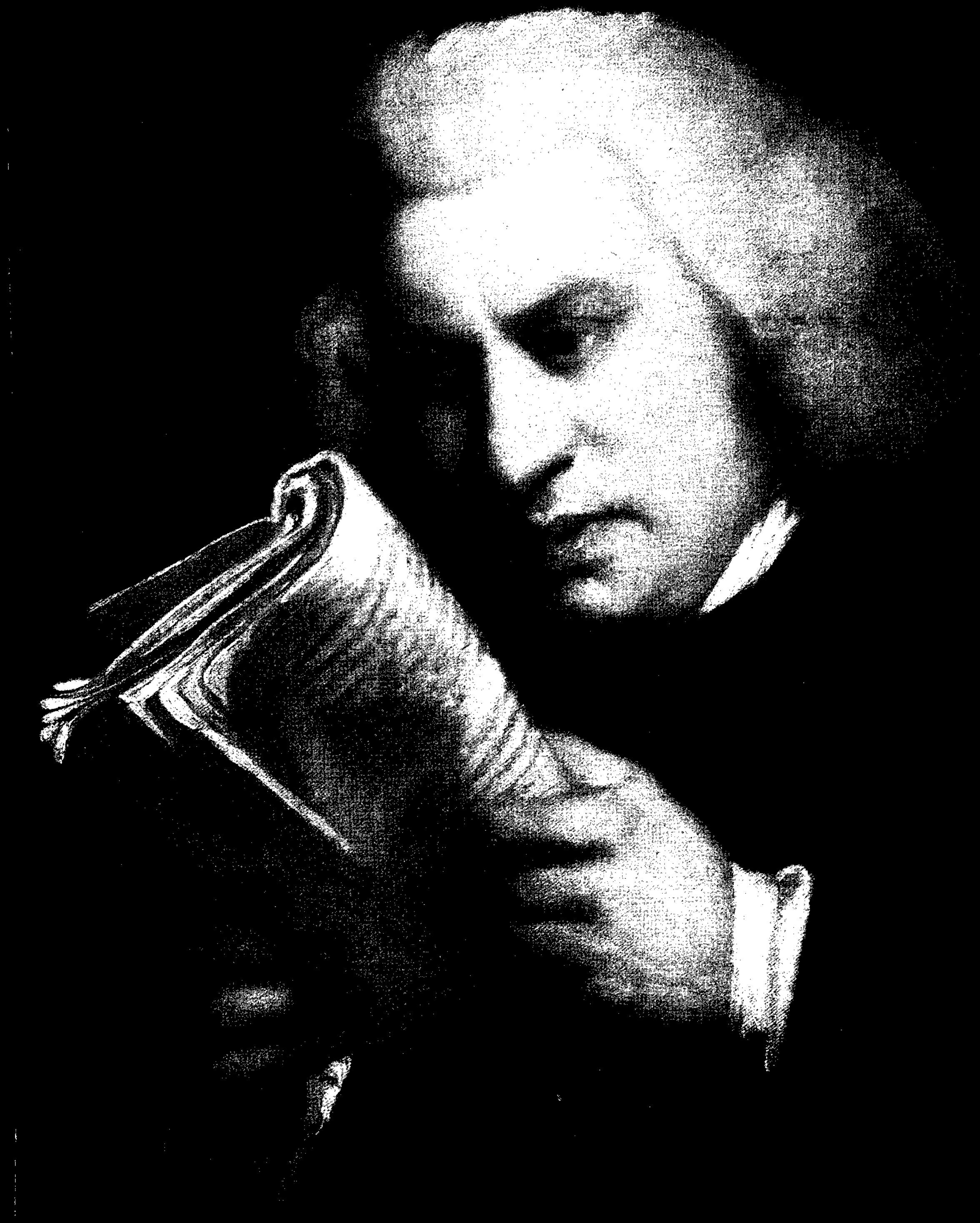
Can a man be really great whose greatest claim to fame is to have been the subject of a great biography, perhaps the greatest ever written? Of the biographer himself, Macaulay wrote (one year before Carlyle): "Homer is not more decidedly the first of heroic poets, Shakespeare is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers. He has no second. He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them." This despite the fact that the biography opens with the words, "To write the life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others . . . is an arduous, and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task."

A great biography could be written, at least in theory, about a man who was not of the first importance. Johnson himself wrote a small biographical masterpiece about the reprobate poet Richard Savage, who would by now have been entirely forgotten had Johnson not done so. But great as Boswell's book is, it could not have been written about any man taken at random: Johnson found his Boswell, as the saying goes, but it would be truer to say that Boswell found his Johnson. By the end of the *Life*, most of us are convinced that the final encomium of the writer to his subject was fully justified: "Such was SAMUEL JOHNSON, a man whose talents, acquirements, and virtues were so extraordinary, that the more his character is considered, the more he will be regarded by the present age, and by posterity, with admiration and reverence."

My friend, who had read his Boswell and knew Johnson's witticisms well enough, persisted in denying that they were grounds for the unani-

Samuel Johnson at 67, by Joshua Reynolds

THE GRANGER COLLECTION



mous conviction that he found among educated speakers of English that Johnson deserves an honored place in the literary pantheon. We might love him for his peculiarities, esteem him for his character, admire him for his learning, wish we had been present to hear his repartee, yet none of this sufficiently accounts for our reverence for him. His Dictionary was no doubt a stupendous achievement, a colossal monument to individual industry and learning, but so was Alexander Cruden's concordance to the Bible, which provides cross-references for every single word in the King James version. Though Cruden's achievement was of the physical and mental magnitude of Johnson's Dictionary, we do not reverence him in the slightest. Cruden, in fact a very interesting man, is now almost forgotten.

I tried to convey to my friend my personal reaction to Johnson. When I look at Johnson's death mask, I think I see something of his tremendous character and intellect in the huge and craggy features, a rough nobility and a profundity of being, a face that bears the same proportion to the average human visage as the Himalayas do to the Cotswolds: but of course I recognize the objection that I find reflected there only what I was predisposed to find. Likewise when I look at Joshua Reynolds's portraits of Johnson: those extraordinary pictures by a painter who so loved and reverenced his subject and friend that he painted him precisely as he was—not graceful, not handsome, not elegant—convinced that his appearance would speak for itself, that of a man possessed of unmistakable force of character, an unceasing wrestler with the deepest problems of man's existence, a great soul. We may not always agree with Doctor Johnson's answers, but when we look at Reynolds's portraits of him, we can hardly doubt the sincerity, depth, and intelligence of his efforts. All the same, I had to admit (under the cross-examination of my friend) that great portraits are no guarantee of the greatness of their sitters.

Macaulay's summary of Boswell's biographical account gives us a clue as to why we are so moved by Johnson and tend to make him a touchstone of what we consider the most admirable, the highest type of man. Thanks to Boswell, says Macaulay, "Johnson grown old, Johnson in the fulness of his fame and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history." He continues:

> Every thing about him, his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish-sauce and veal-pie with plums, his inexhaustible thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts as he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange-peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings, his vigorous, acute and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates, old Mr Levett and blind Mrs Williams [who lived for years in his household at his expense], the cat Hodge and the negro Frank are all as familiar to us as the objects by which we have been surrounded from childhood.

What Johnson said of the London of his time, that it contains all that human life can afford, seems also true of his own life. Johnson is a good but flawed man, always trying to be, but not always succeeding in being, a better one: he is proud, he is humble; he is weak, he is strong; he is prejudiced, he is generous-minded; he is tenderhearted, he is bad-tempered; he is foolish, he is wise; he is sure of himself, he is modest; he is idle, he is hardworking; he is opinionated, he is consumed by doubt; he is spiritual, he is carnal; he is hopeful, he is despairing; he is skeptical, he is credulous; he is melancholy, he is lighthearted; he is deferential, he is aware that he has no superior in the world;

he is clumsy of body, he is elegant of mind and diction; he is a failure, he is triumphant. We never expect to meet anyone who, to such a degree, encompasses in his being all human vulnerability and human resilience.

Humility and pride contend in Johnson's heart and mind. He does not object in the slightest to social hierarchy—quite the contrary, and consistent with his profound conservatism, he repeatedly supports it as a necessary precondition of civilization—and he has no objection to inherited wealth, eminence, or influence. Yet when he feels slighted by a nobleman, he objects to the insult to his own worth in the most manly, uncompromising, eloquent, and fearless fashion. Writing to Lord Chesterfield, who encouraged him at first to compile his great Dictionary, then ignored him entirely during his years of almost superhuman toil, and finally tried to pose as his great patron once he had brought his Dictionary to completion, Johnson says in prose whose nobility rings down the centuries: "Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? . . . I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the Publick should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself."

His integrity (a virtue no more common in his time than now) shines out from a letter that he wrote to a lady who had asked him to recommend her son to the archbishop of Canterbury for admission to a university (either Oxford or Cambridge):

> MADAM,
>
> I hope you will believe that my delay in answering your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords; but, like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain. . . . When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking. You ask me to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true.

I don't think you could read this letter without perceiving in its writer great intellect, eloquence, wit, knowledge of life derived from deep reflection upon experience, and—what perhaps most compels respect—moral seriousness.

Some people might (and did) find Johnson sententious. His precepts roll through our minds like thunder through hills and valleys—but do they have more meaning than thunder has? They often appear obvious, but they are obvious not because they are clichés or truisms or things that everyone knows and has always known, nor are they like the sermons of a jobbing clergyman who goes through the motions of extolling virtue and condemning sin because it is his job to do so. Johnson's precepts are obvious because they are distillations of the lessons of common human experience, and, once expressed, they are impossible to deny.

At every moment, Johnson reflects on the moral meaning and consequences of human life. In his biography of the dissolute poet and his sometime friend Richard Savage, written at an early stage of his career and originally published anonymously, Johnson exhibits both compassion for, and clear-sighted acknowledgment of the faults of, his subject, whose life he treats as an object for moral and psychological reflection. Who could fail to recognize a common human pattern in his delineation of Savage's greatest failing?

> By imputing none of his miseries to himself he continued to act upon the same principles and to follow the same path; was never made wiser by his sufferings, nor preserved by one misfortune from

> falling into another. He proceeded throughout his life to tread the same steps on the same circle; always applauding his past conduct, or at least forgetting it, to amuse himself with phantoms of happiness which were dancing before him, and willingly turned his eye from the light of reason, when it would have discovered the illusion and shewn him, what he never wanted to see, his real state.

The necessity for honest self-examination, if avoidable misery is to be avoided, could hardly be more eloquently expressed; and it is one of the most serious defects of modern culture and the welfare state that they discourage such self-examination by encouraging the imputation of all miseries to others, and they thus have a disastrous effect upon human character.

Johnson was a man of the Enlightenment. He had a great interest in the experimental sciences, for example, and placed a high value on reason. But he was also acutely aware of the limits of the Enlightenment. He could hold irreconcilable dilemmas in his mind without giving way to nihilism or irrationalism. He was profoundly anti-Romantic: his *Life of Savage* ends with an implicit denunciation of the Romantic notion that the possession of talent excuses a man from the demands of the moral life or social existence:

> This relation [the biography] will not be wholly without its use if . . . those who, in confidence of superior capacities or attainments, disregard the common maxims of life, shall be reminded that nothing will supply the want of prudence, and that negligence and irregularity long continued will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible.

No one could accuse Johnson of being a mindless conformist; it is doubtful whether a more individual individual has ever existed; but he was always prepared to place that limit on his own appetites that, in the opinion of his acquaintance, Edmund Burke, qualified a man for freedom.

In his censure of disregard for the common maxims of life, Johnson displays his deep though flexible conservatism, a conservatism not of the mulish kind opposed to all possible change (Johnson invariably praises advances in knowledge and industry, for example), but of the kind that believes that most men, instead of reasoning from first principles on all occasions, need the aid of the accumulated wisdom of custom, precept, and prejudice most of the time if they are to live a moral life in reasonable harmony and happiness with one another. Johnson criticizes Dean Swift, in his brief biography of him, for his willful and self-conscious eccentricity. "Singularity," he says, "as it implies a contempt of the general practice, is a kind of defiance which justly provokes the hostility of ridicule; he, therefore, who indulges in peculiar traits, is worse than others, if he be not better." Note that Johnson does not deny the possibility of betterment, nor does he believe that the best path has always been found already. But he denies that deviation from the common path, for reasons of vanity, is a virtue; on the contrary, it is a vice. We might have had fewer social problems today if this view had had more currency.

A comparison of Johnson's *Rasselas* with Voltaire's *Candide*—by common consent the two greatest philosophical tales ever written—makes Johnson's greatness stand forth in sharp relief. Published in the same year, 1759, both works attacked facile optimism about human existence. By strange coincidence, both authors had written long poems that addressed the question of optimism before they wrote these two tales exploring the same subject. Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes" suggests that lasting happiness is not of this world, whether sought in power, wealth, or knowledge. Bitterness and disappointment are even the scholar's lot:

> There mark what Ills the Scholar's Life assail,
> Toil, Envy, Want, the

Garret, and the Jail.
See Nations slowly wise
and meanly just,
To buried Merit raise the
tardy Bust.

For Johnson, no form of life is free of care; each has pains at least equal to its joys.

After the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, which killed 30,000 and left the city in ruins, Voltaire wrote a poem that questioned the Leibnizian notion, expressed most pithily in Pope's famous words, "Whatever is, is right." Divine providence being benign, this notion holds, all must be for the best in this, the best of all possible worlds, despite appearances to the contrary, and nothing could be other than it is. Voltaire sharply challenged this view in his "Poem on the Lisbon Disaster; Or an Examination of the Axiom that All Is Well."

Will you say, on seeing
this pile of dead:
"God is revenged, their
death is the price of
their crimes"?
What crime, what fault,
have these infants committed
Who are crushed and
bloody on their mother's
breast?
Did Lisbon, which is no
more, have more vices
Than Paris, than London,
which are sunk in pleasures?

Voltaire's *Candide*, which has always had more renown than Johnson's *Rasselas*, is nevertheless far the more superficial work, its irony crude and shallow compared with that of *Rasselas*. The surface similarities of the stories only underline their difference in depth. The one, *Candide*, attacks a philosophical doctrine; the other, *Rasselas*, addresses a human condition that is with us still. Portraits of the two authors reveal the difference in their character: Voltaire looks like an unregenerate cynic who wants to shock the world by sneering at it, while Johnson looks like a man determined to penetrate to the heart of human existence. The more serious man is also far the funnier.

Candide, a naive, good-natured young man, lives happily in a Westphalian *schloss*, the home of Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh. He falls under the philosophical spell of the household tutor, Dr. Pangloss, who believes that "all is for the best in this, the best of all possible worlds." The book traces Candide's subsequent wanderings round the globe, in the course of which he suffers horrible injustices and ill-treatment, as do all his acquaintances. He witnesses arbitrary misfortunes, including the Lisbon earthquake. In the end, he and Dr. Pangloss are reunited on the banks of the Bosphorus, where they find some kind of tranquillity and happiness. Pangloss, absurdly, still maintains his optimism: since "all events are linked together in the best of all possible worlds," for him their current happiness is the happy consequence of all that they had hitherto suffered and witnessed. Pangloss having been hanged and nearly burned alive by the Inquisition (among many other horrors), the absurdity of his doctrine is evident.

Rasselas is a prince of Abyssinia who, like all royal Abyssinian princes, lives in "the happy valley" until the time comes for him to ascend the throne. (Interestingly, while Voltaire, the rationalist and universalist, displays considerable contempt for German culture, the patriotic and more locally rooted Johnson shows no contempt whatever for Abyssinian or Egyptian culture, suggesting that rootedness and imaginative sympathy for others are not incompatible.) In the happy valley, Rasselas has all his wants supplied; he lives in luxury among ample and continual amusements, and yet he feels discontent despite the perfection of the place and the ease of his existence.

He and his sister, Nekayah, and a philosophical tutor, Imlac, leave the happy valley and search the world for the right way to live. Imlac acts as a kind of ironical chorus to the ideas of the prince and princess. On their journey, they meet the powerful and the powerless, the hermit, the socialite, the sage, the ignoramus, the sophisticate, the peasant: all modes of life, even the most outwardly attractive, have drawbacks, and none answers to all human desires or is free of anxieties and miseries. In the end, the royal pair realize that of the "wishes that they had formed . . . none could be obtained."

The difference in depth of the two books is readily apparent from the difference in the irony that each author employs. Voltaire is heavy and obvious; Johnson, despite his stylistic orotundity, is light and subtle. Candide is expelled from his happy home, Rasselas wants to escape his: already a great difference in depth, for Candide's misfortunes eventuate from outside himself, while Rasselas experiences Man's existential, internally generated dissatisfaction and restlessness. Since no one could possibly imagine a place better than the happy valley, Johnson confronts us from the first with man's inability ever to be satisfied with what he has, which, he suggests, is his glory but also his misery.

Here is Voltaire on Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh: "Monsieur the Baron was one of the most powerful lords in Westphalia, for his château had a door and some windows." Yes, Germany was backward at the time, but the satire is heavy-handed. And the objects of Voltaire's satire are similarly unsubtle. Here is the account of the aftermath of the battle between the Bulgars and the Abars in their war about nothing (*Candide* was written during the Seven Years' War):

> At last, while the two kings had Te Deums sung, each in his own camp, Candide took the opportunity to reason on causes and effects. He passed over piles of dead and dying, and first reached a nearby village; it was in ashes; it was an Abar village that the Bulgars had burnt, according to public law. Here badly wounded old men watched their wives die of slit throats, who held their children to their bloody breasts; there, young girls, slit open after having assuaged the natural needs of several heroes, sighed their last; others, half-burnt, begged that they should be killed off. Brains were spread on the ground, beside cut-off arms and legs.

And here is Voltaire's description of the Portuguese reaction to the earthquake of 1755, which Candide and Pangloss witnessed immediately upon their arrival in Lisbon:

> After the earthquake that had destroyed three-quarters of Lisbon, the learned men of the country had not found a more effective means of preventing total ruin than that of giving the people a good auto-da-fé; it was decided by the University of Coimbra that the spectacle of several people being burnt slowly was an infallible preventative of earthquakes.

This is quite funny, and of course the horrors of war and the excesses of superstition are suitable, if easy, targets of criticism. But there is something irredeemably adolescent in Voltaire's satire, which also lacks real, nonabstract feeling for humanity. Baron Grimm noticed this when the book first came out: a judicious critic writing 2,000 years from now, he said, will probably say that the author was only 25 when he wrote it. In fact, Voltaire was 65, 15 years older than Johnson.

When we turn to Johnson, we find a mind of a completely different quality. Repeatedly, we marvel at Johnson's wisdom and maturity. Rasselas falls for a time under the spell of a rhetorician in Cairo who extols the control of the passions and emotions. In a chapter titled "The prince finds a wise and happy man," he listens to the rhetorician give a lecture:

> His look was venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant. He shewed . . . that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher; that when fancy, the parent of passion, usurps the dominion of the mind, nothing ensues but the natural effect of unlawful government, perturbation and confusion.

Rasselas "listened to him with the veneration due to the instructions of a superior being" and visited him the following day to learn more wisdom from him. But "he found the philosopher in a room half darkened, and his eyes misty, and his face pale."

The philosopher's only daughter has died in the night of a fever. "What I suffer cannot be remedied, what I have lost cannot be supplied." Rasselas then confronts him with his own fine words about the primacy of reason over sentiments, to which the philosopher replies that Rasselas speaks like one who has never lost anyone. "What comfort," asks the philosopher, "can truth and reason afford me? Of what effect are they now, but to tell me that my daughter will not be restored?"

Rasselas, "whose humanity would not suffer him to insult misery with reproof, went away convinced of the emptiness of rhetorical sound, and the inefficacy of polished periods and studied sentences."

Here is real education of both the heart and mind—and confirmation of Imlac's warning to Rasselas to "be not too hasty . . . to trust or to admire the teachers of morality: they discourse like angels, but they live like men." The prince is a callow, young, inexperienced man, yet he is good enough of heart to understand at once that sometimes fellow-feeling must trump logic and argument. And Johnson's profundity is to know that reason's evident limitations do not make it—or even rhetoric's "polished periods and studied sentences"—valueless, but only limited. Our capacity of reason is magnificent, to be sure; but there are mysteries in human experience that transcend even reason's explanatory powers.

In a later episode, Rasselas and his sister discuss the advantages and disadvantages of early and late marriage, and come to the conclusion that there is no means by which the advantages of both can be reconciled and the disadvantages be avoided. All the things that men desire are not compatible, and therefore discontent is the lot of Man; as Rasselas's sister, Nekayah, puts it: "No man can, at the same time, fill his cup from the source and from the mouth of the Nile." A man who understands this will not as a result cease to experience incompatible desires—for example, those for security and excitement—but he will be less embittered that he cannot have everything he wants. An understanding of the imperfectibility of life is necessary for both happiness and virtue.

Throughout his writings, Johnson says things that strike us as obvious—but with the force of revelation. What he says of Richard Savage is, in fact, truer of himself: "[W]hat no other man would have thought on, it now appears scarcely possible for any man to miss." His writings appeal to "whoever will attend to the motions of his own mind," attention that for him is a fundamental duty. Few men have ever paid more serious attention to introspection than Doctor Johnson, not as a means of self-indulgence but as necessary to moral improvement and to an understanding of human nature. "We all know our own state," he says elsewhere, "if we could be induced to consider it." It is Doctor Johnson's purpose to recall us to ourselves: perhaps that explains why people now find him so disturbing to read.

He says things that are obvious, but only obvious once he has pointed them out. In *The Rambler*, number 159, for example, he tells us that bashfulness is often a disguised self-importance. The bashful person "considers that what he shall say or do will never be forgotten; that renown or infamy are suspended upon every syllable." But, says Johnson, "He that considers how little he dwells upon the condition of others, will learn how little the attention of others is attracted by himself."

Every chapter of *Rasselas* contains thoughts so penetrating that they could only be those of a man of the character portrayed by Boswell. Johnson is brandy to Voltaire's thin beer (a strange reversal of national comestibles). Take the visit of Rasselas and Imlac to the Pyramids. When Imlac proposes the trip, Rasselas objects that it is men, not their past works, that interest him. Imlac replies: "To judge rightly of the present we must oppose it to the past; for all judgement is comparative, and of the future nothing can be known."

Having established that "to see men we must see their works," Imlac continues: "If we act only for ourselves, to neglect the study of history is not prudent; if we are entrusted with the care of others, it is not just."

When they finally arrive at the Pyramids, Imlac's reflections are profound:

> [F]or the pyramids, no reason has ever been given adequate to the cost and labour of the work. The narrowness of the chambers proves that it could afford no retreat from enemies, and treasures might have been reposited at far less expense with equal security. It seems to have been erected only in compliance with that hunger of imagination which preys incessantly upon life, and must be always appeased by some employment. Those who have already all that they can enjoy must enlarge their desires. He that has built for use till use is supplied must begin to build for vanity.

And finally:

> I consider this mighty structure as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments.

The last chapter of the book is titled "The conclusion, in which nothing is concluded." This is not a facile irony, as it might have been if a postmodernist had written it; it is a statement of the difficulties with which Johnson wrestled all his life—as we all must, if we pause for thought.

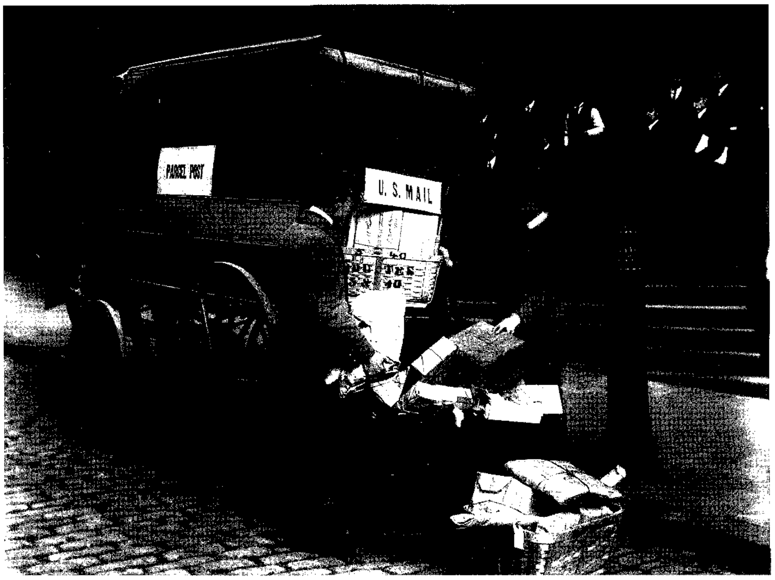
When one considers that Voltaire was no inconsiderable person and yet was shallow by comparison with Johnson, and that Johnson wrote *Rasselas* in a week to pay for his mother's medical treatment and funeral, one begins to grasp the intellectual and moral dimension of the man. What a mighty mind, so furnished that it could write such a book in a week, to pay such comparatively trifling bills! Of course, the speed of his work also explains why Johnson was always aware, and felt deeply guilty, that he had not achieved as much as he might had he applied himself more diligently, and that "I have neither attempted nor formed any scheme of Life by which I may do good and please God" (this on his 62nd birthday). Johnson was never satisfied with himself, and did not blame the world for his dissatisfaction; 50 years after he was cheekily disobliging to his impoverished father, the GREAT SAMUEL JOHNSON, in Boswell's phrase, stood bareheaded for an hour in the rain in Uttoxeter marketplace in atonement for his sin.

Johnson is an unusual writer, in that he is far greater than the sum of his parts. For all the excellence of *Rasselas*, Johnson is not among the greatest imaginative writers of English literature; only a few lines of his poetry are now remembered; his essays, though vastly more self-analytically honest and morally useful than anything Freud wrote, do not appeal to an age that prefers psychobabble to true reflection, and in which self-exculpation is de rigueur.

However, his Dictionary—43,000 definitions and 110,000 citations from literature, a work of near unimaginable proportions, when one considers the labor of devising for oneself the definition of even one word—provides a key to his abiding greatness. His definition of the word "conscience" is "the knowledge or faculty by which we judge the goodness or wickedness of ourselves." Above all, Johnson saw the exercise of judgment as the supreme human duty; however inviting it is for human beings to avoid judgment, because it is impossible to judge correctly of everything, it is inescapably necessary to make judgments. Truly, he was as Boswell described him, a man whose extraordinary "character" compels "admiration and reverence—and illuminates every line he wrote. "His mind resembled the vast amphitheatre, the Coliseum of Rome," Boswell wrote. "In the centre stood his judgement, which like a mighty gladiator, combated those apprehensions that, like the wild beasts of the arena, were all around in cells, ready to be let out upon him." And, of course, upon us.

I think I can return an answer to my once-Russian friend.

Letters



THE ART ARCHIVE/CULVER PICTURES

Becoming Citizens . . .

To the editor:

The points that Steven Malanga makes in "How Unskilled Immigrants Hurt Our Economy" [Summer 2006] are all perfectly valid. However, the solutions he proposes—withdrawing or withholding benefits and limiting family-preference visas—ignore another critical necessity: stopping the automatic bestowal of U.S. citizenship upon anyone born in the U.S. This privilege should be extended only to children of those legally in the U.S., either citizens or permanent residents.

A. J. Shankar
Bloomington, MN

To the editor:

Here's the title of an article I could write: "How the U.S. Made Immigration and Citizenship Almost Impossible for a British Engineer with an Advanced Degree in Mechanical Engineering." During his naturalization process, which took about seven years to complete, he was required to return to the U.S. embassy in London to be interviewed, and he had to take citizenship classes and rigorous tests, risking the possible loss of resident status if he failed. He feels justified resentment against the U.S. government for its immigration policy. I share his resentment.

Bill Overton
Via e-mail

Steven Malanga responds:

Mr. Shankar's letter anticipates the next step in the argument. In my story in this issue of *City Journal* ["The Right Immigration Debate," page 14], I point out that the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—which, according to the Supreme Court's interpretation, automatically grants citizenship to anyone born on American soil—was not designed for that purpose by its framers, who passed it to ensure that Southern states in the post–Civil War era did not deny citizenship to former slaves. Few developed countries grant automatic citizenship to anyone born on their soil; Ireland was the last of the 25 European Union members to do so, but it recently changed its constitution. Perhaps now, in an era in which our extensive social welfare programs make America a magnet for the world's poor, it's time to begin a debate on whether to continue granting this right.

Mr. Overton's anecdote reminds us of how unfair the selective enforcement of our immigration laws is. By turning a blind eye toward waves of unskilled illegals who work here but forcing others through an exacting process, we undermine the rule of law and create cynicism among our newest citizens and permanent legal residents.

. . . and Unbecoming Ones

To the editor:

Heather Mac Donald is correct ["Seeing Today's Immigrants Straight," Summer 2006], and pro-immigrant conservatives are wrong. Immigrants today assimilate into the underclass of illegitimacy and welfare dependency, not the middle class. They may be socially conservative on some issues but easily fall prey to typical class-warfare socialist appeals, since they were so used to hearing and agreeing with those appeals

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in their home countries. Our immigration system is broken. We should end family (or chain) migration and instead focus on allowing only those with high levels of income, education, skills, and English-language ability to immigrate. America's immigration policy should be based on what is best for America, not what is best for immigrants.

Jorge Amselle
Centreville, VA

To the editor:

I grew up in Orange County, California. We would move every few years as the Mexican gang territory expanded. As a young adult, I realized that I would never be able to afford a home where my children could be safe at school. I escaped to the Midwest, where, to my surprise, white and black Americans do those jobs that white and black Californians supposedly will not do. (I have always found that argument particularly offensive, since my dad and uncle made a living hanging drywall.)

Dustin Dingman
Via e-mail

To the editor:

I appreciate Heather Mac Donald's citing the *Migration Information Source* and would like to clarify a couple of points. First, the analysis of incarceration among first- and second-generation young men should be attributed to Rubén G. Rumbaut, Roberto G. Gonzales, Golnaz Komaie, and Charlie V. Morgan, who are at the University of California, Irvine. The Migration Policy Institute publishes the *Migration Information Source* but neither conducted the research nor wrote the analysis. Second, it is a mischaracterization to refer to MPI as "pro-immigrant," as we do not advocate on behalf of immigrants.

Colleen Coffey
Deputy Director of Communications
Migration Policy Institute

Weird Science

To the editor:

Sol Stern recently wrote an article claiming that schools focused on social justice do not sufficiently challenge students ["The Ed Schools' Latest—and Worst—Humbug," Summer 2006]. Before he wrote it, I spoke with him about the physics program here at the School for Democracy and Leadership, one of the social justice schools he criticizes, and he debated whether my students should, for example, use their knowledge of nuclear physics to consider nuclear proliferation in the world.

At the School for Democracy and Leadership, 100 percent of students enroll in physics, far better than the national average of 25 percent. Students' daily attendance and pass rates (above 90 percent and 80 percent, respectively) greatly exceed the average numbers for the city. Students enroll in advanced-placement courses, and they participate in internships researching cancer treatments and the origins of the universe through cosmology. Based on what data and analysis techniques has Stern come to the conclusion that schools focused on social justice do not promote a quality education?

Jhumki Basu
Physics Teacher
School for Democracy and Leadership

Sol Stern responds:

Contrary to the impression given in Ms. Basu's letter, I did not utter a word of criticism in the three paragraphs that I wrote about her school. I merely reported what she and Principal Nancy Gannon told me: that they were followers of Marxist educator Paolo Freire and that his "liberation pedagogy" guided them in creating their school.

I do believe, as I stated in the article, that such schools violate the trust of taxpayers, who finance the public schools and who do not expect them to indoctrinate children into the partisan political ideology that Basu euphemistically calls "social justice." As for her statistics "proving" that her students are doing well: surely a scientist should realize that they hardly constitute robust evidence of academic achievement. How about waiting until we see the results of the AP and Regents exams?

Aging Gracefully

To the editor:

Thank you for Kay S. Hymowitz's honest depiction of reality in a time of mass delusions on the part of many older women ["Desperate Grandmas," Summer 2006]. I am 59 and have been married for 37 years,

Letters

with two grown children. Growing old is no picnic, but the compensations are many, most notably the enjoyment of my children's company, a wonderful shared life with my husband, and a rich and varied group of friends of all ages.

I've had my day in the sun, and I get so much joy from the younger generation. I love the fact that they're still interested in my point of view, but it's their world now, and there's a certain relief in letting them take over while I enjoy the freedom of reading, writing, learning, and discussing ideas with friends over a glass or two of red wine.

I think I look okay for an old broad, but you can't compete with youth, however good your surgeon is, so I'm not going to try. These days, when I look in the mirror, I see my mother, and that makes me happy. She was a fantastic woman, a true grown-up who knew how to live, loved her grandchildren, and made the world a better place to be in.

Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville, Ontario, Canada

To the editor:

Talk about double standards. I'm an aging male baby boomer, and for as long as I can remember, old men have refused to grow old, buying sports cars and chasing after young women. Old men making fools of themselves over very young women was already a stock comic turn when Chaucer used it in "The Miller's Tale." Almost every famous man who didn't die young lived to act the fool over very young women. Now that older women are refusing to lie down and die at 60, their refusal is rampant individualism and a threat to the social fabric. Is your next article going to claim that men over 60 who buy sports cars are destroying the country?

John Mize
Via e-mail

To the editor:

Thank you for mentioning my book, *Better Than I Ever Expected: Straight Talk about Sex after Sixty*. It, and the trend of boomer books about sexuality, are not a display of narcissism—they evolve from a desire to be truthful to ourselves and to others, to acknowledge our own journey straightforwardly. That isn't narcissism; it's healing, assertiveness, and opening up a previously taboo subject—elder sexuality—to dialogue.

Joan Price
Via e-mail

The Working Poor?

To the editor:

In "Is There a New York Housing Crisis?" [Summer 2006], Nicole Gelinas mentions the Abyssinian Development Corporation's affordable housing, and writes: "[W]hen I asked ADC's Zanetta Addams-Pilgrim if it was important that ADC's tenants work, she told me that 'if a woman is pregnant or if she has five children, working is not something she's going to be doing.' " This quotation was taken out of context. We were discussing ADC's constituents who live in Abyssinian House, a homeless shelter, not the tenants of our affordable-housing initiatives.

Zanetta Addams-Pilgrim
Vice President, External Affairs
Abyssinian Development Corporation

Nicole Gelinas responds:

In fact, I asked Ms. Addams-Pilgrim what ADC's work requirements were for tenants in its affordable-housing developments, and reported the answer that I received.

Boy Crazy

To the editor:

Gerry Garibaldi's perception of the radical feminist contribution to the situation of boys in grade school ["How the Schools Shortchange Boys," Summer 2006] is barely the tip of the iceberg. Radical feminists espouse a philosophy of hatred that targets males of all ages. They are driven by rage, malice, envy, and spite, the intensity of which is by no means grasped by the extra-academic world. I spent a quarter of a century cheek-by-jowl with academic feminists when I was an active professor, and it took me considerable time to fathom the depths of the rage and hatred that drove them. I have concluded that being a feminist may well be a form of pathology or constitute a symptom of pathology.

Male children should be systematically removed from feminist teachers in grade school, while feminist teachers in high school need to be monitored by

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parents' groups regarding the amount of anti-male hate rhetoric and literature they disseminate. Universities need to be hit hard with hostile-environment sexual-harassment suits targeting feminist professors—and specifically women's studies programs and departments, from which radiates the anti-male hate teaching that ultimately filters down to the grade school where Garibaldi teaches.

Michael McCanles
Professor Emeritus of English
Marquette University

To the editor:

Like Gerry Garibaldi, I came to teaching later in life—in my case, after 26 years as a police officer. Teaching history gives me a leg up with boys because of their love of military history. What is frustrating is that military history is being de-emphasized in favor of more politically correct material. Students know about the Holocaust and the Japanese internment but know little about the decisive battles of any of the nation's wars. These are important also.

I have no problem with Individualized Educational Programs for children with disabilities, but I too think they are overused, especially on boys. And the degradation of the role of the white European male in history is enforced by standardized tests that are more concerned with political correctness than with historical accuracy. Until this bias is corrected, more boys will become disenchanted and frustrated with school and we will continue to lose them.

Oh, well: as Judge Smails said in the movie *Caddyshack*, "The world needs ditchdiggers, too."

Steve Flickinger
Miamisburg, OH

To the editor:

As a teacher in an all-girls' school, I see all the behaviors that Gerry Garibaldi implies are only found in boys. I once had a student stand up in the middle of a test and loudly ask why all the true-and-false answers were false—behavior similar to what Brandon did in Garibaldi's account. There are also students diagnosed with learning disabilities, which he claims are not seen in girl students. And I wish my students would all eagerly take out their pencils when I tell them to!

Feminists often like girls' schools because the editors, club presidents, and so on are all female. There's a downside, though: all the troublemakers and failures are female as well.

Kimberly Weiss
Bayonne, NJ

Make Compstat Universal

To the editor:

I'm glad that Heather Mac Donald is still writing about cops—the great, visible success of public-safety programs that lead to order, prosperity, and real social improvement. And I'm very glad for her mention of the NYPD's refinements to its Compstat system. This comprehensive, monitored, feedback-laden approach should be used in evaluating and directing many more—all?—government services.

Tom Sullivan
Via e-mail

A Time Immemorial

To the editor:

I want to let you know how touching I found Steven Malanga's "The Last Full Measure" [Summer 2006], about suburban tributes to the murdered souls of 9/11. Hardly a day passes that I don't think of those people and wonder why the memorial site at Ground Zero has been so botched. It's heartening, though bittersweet, to read about the beautiful memorials put up elsewhere.

Carol Kelley
Sugar Land, TX

To the editor:

Perhaps it's time to revisit *City Journal*'s recommendations for Ground Zero [see "What Should Rise from the Ashes?," Autumn 2001]. The neoclassical elements in the memorial and buildings that you proposed were reminiscent of an era when New York represented American greatness. It's sad that the job of creating so important a memorial and rebuilding the center of the financial district fell to us at a time when we had weak and unimaginative leadership in Albany, and a city of men without chests.

Mark Alesse
Via e-mail

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Nicole Gelinas is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and the Searle Freedom Trust Fellow at the Manhattan Institute. She is a Chartered Financial Analyst.

Christopher Gray founded the Office for Metropolitan History in 1975 and has written the "Streetscapes" column for the *New York Times* since 1987.

Victor Davis Hanson is a contributing editor of *City Journal*. He is the author, most recently, of *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War*. His other books include *Mexifornia* and *Carnage and Culture*. He is a classicist and military historian at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Kay S. Hymowitz, a contributing editor of *City Journal* and the William E. Simon Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, is the author of *Liberation's Children* and *Ready or Not*. Her new book, *Marriage and Caste in America*, is a collection of her *City Journal* essays.

Stefan Kanfer, a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a former editor of *Time*, is the author of a dozen novels and social histories. His new book is *Stardust Lost*, a history of the Yiddish theater in New York.

Heather Mac Donald is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and the John M. Olin Fellow at the Manhattan Institute. She is the author of *Are Cops Racist?* and *The Burden of Bad Ideas*.

Steven Malanga is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. He is the author of *The New New Left*, a collection of his *City Journal* essays.

Harry Stein is a contributing editor of *City Journal*. A journalist and novelist, he is the author of *How I Accidentally Joined the Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy (and Found Inner Peace)* and *The Girl Watchers Club*.

James Q. Wilson, formerly a professor at Harvard and at UCLA, now lectures at Pepperdine University. Among his recent books are *The Moral Sense* and *The Marriage Problem*. His article is adapted from a Manhattan Institute lecture.

Detail of *Liner Queen Elizabeth Takes Refuge in New York*, 1940, by Achille Beltrame, The Art Archive/Dagli Orti (A)

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Old Glories

Christopher Gray

They sprang up in a day, like April wildflowers. Big ones, small ones, expensive ones, cheap ones, linen, cotton, polyester—there were even color printouts from the Web. Five years later, the American flags that covered the city in red, white, and blue have almost all faded away.

I had long suspended a flag on the wall outside my office, between the two windows—I loved how the wind would lift it up, splashing the room with red and blue. So I was a touch proprietary about the flags that popped out after 9/11—it fits my sinful pride to feel superior to all the Patriot-Come-Latelys. But I was also happy to see them, as if in one of Childe Hassam's World War I paintings—not just on Fifth Avenue, but across the city. To judge from photographs from the 1940s, New York had a hundred times the flags displayed in 2001 than flew during the "Good War."

I had never liked flag wavers. But I began to respond to the flag after working up-country in Nigeria in 1975. When I returned to the U.S., I realized that we were so rich. Not money so much as infrastructure: courts, roads, sewage, telephone lines, health systems, and, especially, a tradition of fairness and freedom—what a privilege to live here! This vegetarian hippie kissed the ground at JFK.

The improvised flag displays after 9/11 were particularly moving. Some riggers working on the El Dorado, at 90th Street and Central Park West, ran a big one out on a cable between the two towers. Walking across Central Park to work every day, I would look forward to going down West 81st Street, off Central Park West—all the co-ops hung flags vertically from the ends of the canopies, and you could touch them as you passed.

But you don't have to be a summer soldier to have the red, white, and blue impulse fade, and we gradually entered this cold gray winter of discontent—a war on a few thousand terrorists seems harder to run than a land battle across Europe, Africa, and Asia. So one by one, the flags came down. The makeshift stanchions wore out, the edges frayed, the soot and dirt got to them—no doubt each one wound up removed for some good reason, yet not replaced. On West 81st Street, Hassam's vision got thinner and thinner—the last flag disappeared in early 2005. I asked one doorman how the co-op decided to take it down. He was a recent immigrant, and seemed to disapprove. "Some the tenants, they be, they no like. Embarrassed, you know?"

And how do you mount a flag on an apartment house in the city, anyway? Over on 85th and Broadway, one co-op put out a big aluminum flagpole from the third floor. It must have cost $1,000, and kudos to them—but it does look a bit awkward. At 1 East End Avenue, they have a genteel planted strip and put in a vertical flagpole—honor to their house for the attempt, but it does look a little odd. At 1088 Park Avenue, one shareholder—over some stiff opposition—persuaded the board to put a real giant up, flat against the neoclassical facade. It partly covers the two-story entrance archway, so at night, the lights behind illuminate it—very beautiful. I wince when I see the anchors drilled directly into the stone, and not into the mortar joints, but in wartime even an architectural historian needs a strong stomach.

On Park, you can now count the flags on a few hands. That's not all to the bad, because many buildings—each worth in aggregate at least $100 million—kept their flags in atrocious condition. A block south of me, one co-op only recently thought better of its patriotic fervor: a soiled poly flag proudly waving from . . . an old broomstick affixed to a street tree with gaffers' tape. What so proudly we hailed!

It was a horrible privilege to live through that awful period—but one in which we all felt we were pulling together. To my co-op's credit, we have one of the last flags standing on Park. Outside my office, I switched the flag to a nearby flagpole, where it quietly wafts in the Broadway breezes. I also replaced it with a vintage model—48 stars. I've always liked the even rows, six stars by eight stars. Things were so much simpler then.

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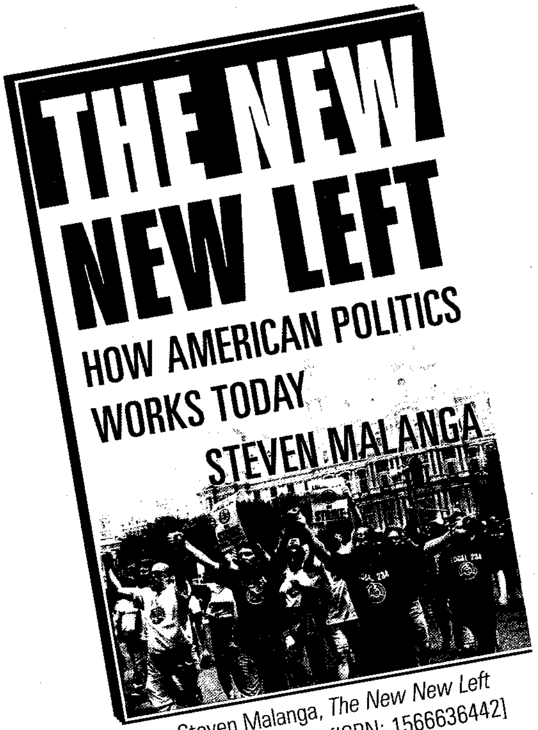
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STEVEN MALANGA

Steven Malanga, *The New New Left*
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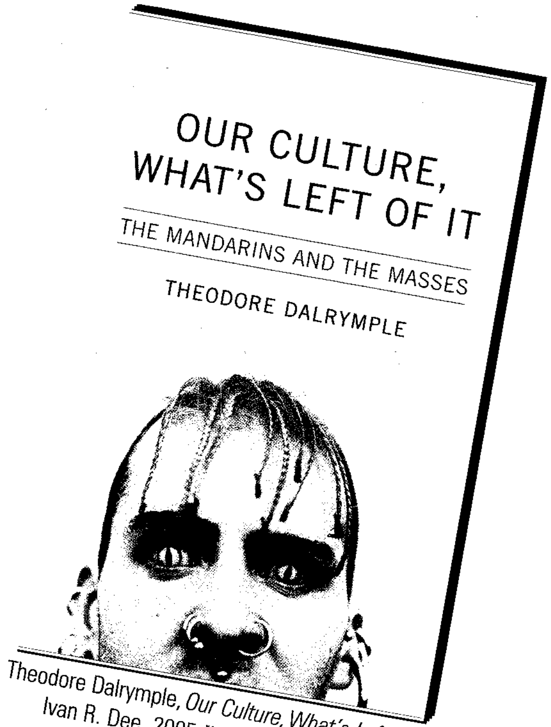
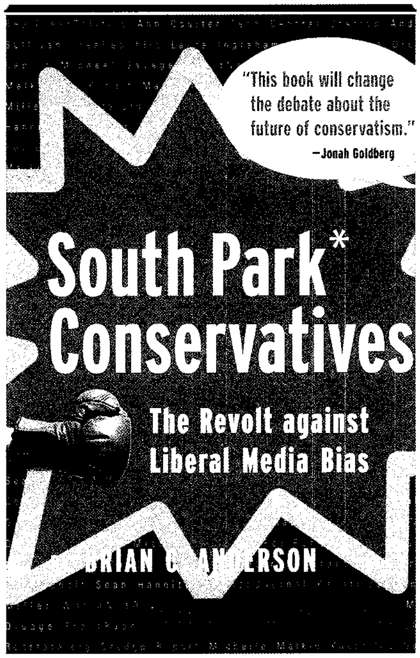

OUR CULTURE,
WHAT'S LEFT OF IT
THE MANDARINS AND THE MASSES
THEODORE DALRYMPLE

Theodore Dalrymple, *Our Culture, What's Left of It*
Ivan R. Dee, 2005 [ISBN: 1566636434]
". . . the Orwell of our time."
-Denis Dutton, *Arts & Letters Daily*
". . . the Edmund Burke of our age . . . ."
-Roger Kimball, *The New Criterion*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Regnery, 2005 [ISBN: 0895260190]
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recommend a better book on this subject."
-David Horowitz